Riverside Literature Series

BEOWULF

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The Riverside Literature Series

BEOWULF

AND THE FINNESBURH FRAGMENT

TRANSLATED FROM THE OLD ENGLISH,
WITH AN INTRODUCTORY SKETCH AND NOTES

BY

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BOSTON NEW YORK CHICAGO
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Introductory Sketch	iii
Beowulf	1
Notes	87
The Fight at Finnesburh	89

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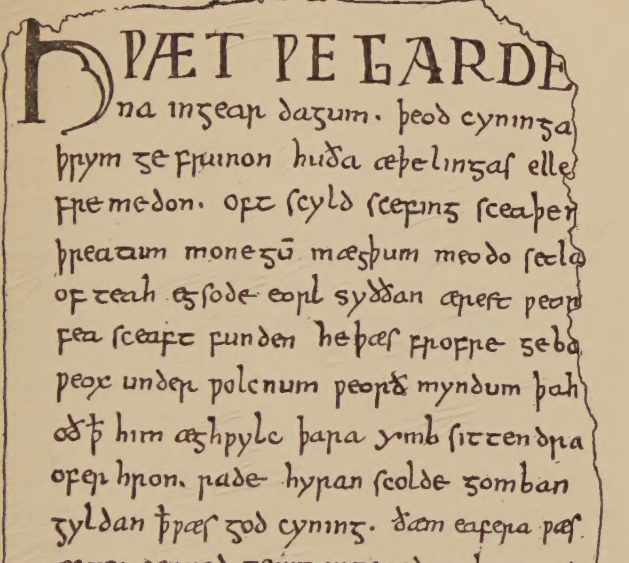

HÆT WE GARDE
na in ʒeaʀ daʒum. þeod cyninʒa
þrym ʒe frunon huða æþelinʒas elle
fremedon. oft scyld scefinʒ sceaþe
þreatum monezū mæʒþum meodo sela
of teah eʒsode eorl syþþan æriest weox
fea sceaft funden he þæs frofre ʒeba
weox under wolcnum weorð myndum þah
oð þ him æʒhwylc þara ymb sittendra
ofer hron rade hyran scolde ʒomban
ʒyldan þæs ʒod cyninʒ. ðæm eafera wæs
æfter cenned ʒeonʒ in ʒeardum þone ʒod
sende folce to frofre fyren þearfe on
ʒeat þ he ær þrum aldor lease. lanʒe
hwile him þæs liffrea wuldres wealdend
worold are forʒeaf. beowulf wæs breme
blæd wide sprang scyldes eafera scede
landum in. Spa sceal ʒeonʒ ʒuma ʒode
ʒe wyrcean fromum feoh ʒiftum on fæder

The First Page of Beowulf Folio 129ʳ of MS. Cott. Vitellius A. XV in the British Museum; transliterated in part, p. xxii.

INTRODUCTORY SKETCH

When Henry VIII, at Cromwell's suggestion, suppressed in 1536 the smaller monasteries, and in 1539 and 1540, those which were larger and richer, the king and his unscrupulous vicar-general no doubt profited greatly, but literature suffered an irreparable loss. The rich stores of these treasure-houses of ancient learning were in great part scattered and lost, and there were few to heed or care. As at thought of the lost plays of Shakespeare, regret is awakened, the greater because unavailing, when such testimony is considered as that of Bishop John Bale in his preface to Leland's "New Year's Gift to Henry VIII," in 1549. Though an ardent reformer and approving the suppression of the monasteries, Bishop Bale cannot repress his sorrow and indignation. He writes as follows: —

Never had we been offended for the loss of our libraries, being so many in number and in so desolate places for the more part, if the chief monuments and most notable works of our excellent writers had been reserved. If there had been in every shire of England but one solemn library to the preservation of those noble works and preferment of good learnings in our posterity, it had been yet somewhat. But, to destroy all without consideration, a great number of them which purchased those superstitious mansions reserved of those library books . . . some to scour their candlesticks, and some to rub their boots. Some they sold to the grocers and soap-sellers, and some over sea to the bookbinders, not in small number, but at times whole ships full, to the wondering of the foreign nations. Yea, the universities of this realm are not all clear in this detestable fact. But cursed is . . . [he] which seeketh to be fed with such ungodly

gains and so deeply shameth his natural country. I know a merchant man, which shall at this time be nameless, that bought the contents of two noble libraries for forty shillings' price, a shame it is to be spoken. This stuff hath he occupied in the stead of gray paper by the space of more than these ten years, and yet he hath store enough for as many years to come. I judge this to be true, and utter it with heaviness, that neither the Britains under the Romans and Saxons, nor yet the English people under the Danes and Normans, had ever such damage of their learned monuments as we have seen in our time.

Not all, fortunately, were lost. John Leland, the King's Antiquary, saved as many manuscripts as his opportunities and means permitted, and Dr. Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury, and, later, Sir Robert Cotton, were zealous collectors. But Bale's account finds illustration in the fact that two Old English epics, the "Fight at Finnesburh" and the "Waldere," are known to us only through fragments, accidentally preserved upon parts of bindings or covers of other works.

The manuscript of "Beowulf," one of those collected by Sir Robert Cotton, is now enshrined in the British Museum under the caption "Ms. Cott. Vitellius A. 15." The Cotton manuscripts were catalogued under the names of the Roman emperors whose busts stood over the cases which held them, the "Beowulf" being one of those beneath the bust of Vitellius. This casual association of names surely affords one of those

> nice antitheses of perfect poise,
> Chance in his curious rhetoric employs,

suggesting, as it does, a contrast between the great-souled hero and wise king of the Geats and the maudlin emperor, sunk in self-indulgence, whose throne was established by murder, even though Tacitus could say

of his earlier record that "in his provincial administration he displayed the virtues of a former age."

Great indeed would have been our loss, if the most precious monument of Teutonic antiquity, the only remaining folk-epic of the Germanic peoples, had perished in doing menial service to grocer or soap-seller, or been cut to strips by the book-binder. It was to run a further risk. More than a hundred of the Cotton manuscripts were destroyed or lost, and ninety-eight, among them the "Beowulf," injured, by the fire in 1731 in Little Dean's Yard, Westminster, where they were housed. The edges of the "Beowulf" were charred, but, fortunately, parchment resists flame to a remarkable degree, as appeared also recently in the deplorable disaster to the library at Turin. The charred edges, however, crumbled easily, and many words and letters have disappeared between 1786, when Thorkelin used the manuscript, and the present time. The manuscript was not carefully bound and safeguarded formerly, as it is now.

The full story is not yet told of the haps and chances that might have cost us our knowledge of the poem, our enjoyment of the inspiriting story it tells, the picture it gives us of the life of our remote ancestors. It might have been lost to us at the very beginning for the following reason. The manuscript is of the tenth century, but the original poems from which the poem was made were much earlier. Our Teutonic forefathers who invaded England in the fifth century had a literature, but it was not written down; it was handed down by memory from one person to another. When in time these Teutonic invaders became Christian, they learned to know written literature, but, naturally, those who could write composed religious works; for

example, the poems on Bible stories long attributed to Cædmon, and those on sacred legends by the first great English poet whose name we know and whose works we possess, Cynewulf. The greater part of Old English poetry is religious, but in time men were found to put in writing poems not religious, such as the "Widsith" and "Deor," which seem earlier than the coming to England. And some monk, perhaps several working one after another, thought it worth while to make a single complete poem from certain popular lays about the hero Beowulf, and to commit it to writing. But if no one had thought to do this, we should never have heard of Beowulf at all.

To understand how the original poems arose from which the "Beowulf" was composed as we know it, we must go back to the earlier, unwritten literature.[1] The Teutons were fond of poetry, as Tacitus tells us. They made songs celebrating noteworthy events, and these were remembered and repeated for a longer or shorter time. If the poem was about a truly great hero or happening, and was worth perpetuating, it was handed down from one person to another, becoming a permanent part of the tribal or national or racial lit-

[1] The reader may be referred for extended study of *Beowulf* to the editions by Heyne-Socin, Wyatt, and Holder; to Ten Brink's *English Literature*, Stopford Brooke's *Early English Literature*, Arnold's *Notes on Beowulf*, Morley's *English Writers* (an encyclopædic work to be used with caution), Kögel's *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, Earle's *Deeds of Beowulf*, Clark Hall's *Beowulf*, and above all, for stimulating study, to Ker's *Epic and Romance*. Many statements and views in one or another of these works represent individual opinion or are now set aside, but all are helpful. Among translations, the reader may examine those of Morris and Wyatt, Earle, Garnett, Clark Hall, John Lesslie Hall, and Tinker; also Tinker's monograph on the translation of *Beowulf*.

erature. It is especially important to note that poems preserved by this process of tradition would not remain unchanged. Successive poets bettered them, either as regards poetic form or by improving the detail of the story to render it more striking or interesting. While the art of poetry seems to have been very generally cultivated, there were, moreover, professional poets (called in Old English *scop* or *glēoman*), who either went from place to place or had positions at the courts of chieftains or kings, and whose living and well-being depended on their poetic gift.[1] They would inevitably bend their efforts to bettering the songs they sang. Moreover, as these songs formed the record of the ancestry of kings and peoples, and of the deeds they had performed in the past, — served as history, in brief, — there was a natural tendency to enlarge and magnify the deeds and events commemorated. As these receded into the past, a hero soon came to be pictured as greater and stronger, his deeds as more wonderful, a battle or war as fiercer or longer, than they had actually been. Supernatural attributes, even, might be added to a hero. Stories of different heroes might after a time be run together, or even stories of a hero and of a god, as seems to have been the case with Beowulf. Thus, as will be seen, these early poems were based upon historic fact, the historic element, however, being usually overlaid or entirely obscured by poetic or mythical additions.

It is possible to discover a basis of historic fact in our Old English epic. Beowulf is held to have been a real person. While not known himself in history, he

[1] It is a striking fact that two of the oldest poems in English, the *Widsith* (parts of which are the oldest English poetry extant) and *Deor*, have to do with these two classes of poets.

is represented as a retainer and kinsman of Hygelac, king of the Geats, who was killed during a foray into Frisian territory in a battle against a combined army of Frisians, Hugs, and Franks. Hygelac is an historic character. Under the latinized name Chocilaicus or Chocilagus, he appears, and his foray is described, in the "Historia Francorum" of Gregory of Tours and in the "Gesta Regum Francorum." Further, in a manuscript of Phædrus at Wolfenbüttel of the tenth century, it is recorded that the bones of a King Hunglacus, a Geat, had been discovered on an island in the mouth of the Rhine, and that they were then being exhibited to people "coming from a distance" to view them because of their huge size. Hygelac being thus proved historic, it is held, on the authority of the references in the poem (see ll. 1202 ff., 2354 ff., 2501 ff., and 2914 ff.), that Beowulf also was historic, took part in the foray, and may, after Hygelac's defeat, have actually escaped, as the poem relates, through his skill in swimming. He may also have become king and ruled wisely and well. Because of his bravery and prowess and his qualities of mind and heart, he was celebrated in song, and the epic lays about him were handed down through successive generations with the usual enhancement of the hero's traits and deeds characteristic of the process of tradition.

The historical element counts, however, for very little in the poem. Another element is of chief importance, the legendary or mythical. Myths, as we have seen, frequently formed a feature of Teutonic epic, and in the case of Beowulf it is supposed that stories concerning a god, Beowa, and his exploits in slaying certain monsters, were confused and blended

with those of the hero, and became indeed more important than those based on historic fact, because of their more interesting character. As a result of this, while Beowulf remains a man in the poem, he becomes endowed with supernatural strength and daring, and performs such feats as his swimming-match with Breca, his making off with thirty suits of armor after Hygelac's defeat, his swimming down a whole day through the water to the monster's lair. The original character of the myths merged in the poem has been the subject of much study, and various explanations have been offered. One view formerly and still very generally accepted is that Grendel and his mother and the dragon originally represented hostile forces of nature, — such as darkness, winter, the power of the sea, or the pestilential miasma of the fens, — and that the victories achieved over them typified their subdual by the sun, summer, or wind, deified as Beowa. Such myths, according to this view, had been reduced to mere stories of supernatural beings, retaining no trace of their original meaning. Many of the specific interpretations offered are far-fetched and some even ludicrous.[1] It is probable, however, that the general contention is sound, and it is perhaps safe to assume, without going farther, that a god Beowa, whose existence in myth is certain, became confused or blended with Beowulf. The present tendency seems to be to discredit such nature-myths, and to seek the origin of exploits like those of

[1] A convenient reference for the reader is Morley's *English Writers*, i. 343 ff. Morley well says, "Enough of wind and mist. One more of these ingenious turns of the mythologic screw might convert Beowulf into the myth of a mining engineer, if not of a drainpipe."

Beowulf in fights with wild beasts. Mr. Skeat many years ago argued that the fight with Grendel was originally a fight with a bear, and the dragon of Teutonic myth, guarding his hoard in a mound, might readily have originated in a beast harboring in a burial-barrow, in which treasure had been placed. The study of the myths in Beowulf, it may be added, while of great interest and value, contributes little or nothing toward increased appreciation of the interest and beauty of the poem.

Beside the main story, the poem includes a number of incidental references to other stories or sagas, and in several cases such stories are told briefly as episodes linked, by way of comment or illustration, to events in the main story. In the "Beowulf," for example, occurs the earliest version on record of the famous encounter of Siegfried with the dragon, here ascribed to his father, Sigemund. Other examples are the story of Finn, of Heremod, and of Thrytho.

The date of the composition of the songs or lays about Beowulf, on which the poem is based, is naturally difficult to determine, but an approximate date can at least be given. Hygelac's raid took place about 512. Allowing time for Beowulf's reign of fifty years and for the songs about him and the mythic additions to become merged, we may suppose the poems to have taken something like their final form in the seventh century. Further, a reference to the Merovingian dynasty in France (l. 2921), as Mr. Arnold pointed out, indicates that the epic was composed before the fall of that dynasty in 752.

The place of composition offers a very difficult and perplexing question. It is important to remember that the hero is not English, nor the scene in England. In the

poem, Beowulf is a Geat and his home is in Geatland, which in the somewhat dubious geography of the poem assumed by scholars is placed north of the part of Hrothgar's kingdom called Scedelands, or Scedenig, in the extreme southern portion of the Scandinavian peninsula, while Hrothgar's hall, the royal seat of the Danes, where the hero slays Grendel, is placed on the island of Zealand, between Sweden and Denmark. At first sight it would seem as if the stories must have been originally Scandinavian, and must have found their way to the Low German tribes and then have been brought to England during the eighth or ninth century, or perhaps that they reached England during these centuries through the Scandinavians themselves, the so-called "Danes," during their frequent invasions. But definitely satisfactory evidence of a Scandinavian origin is lacking. However — for the matter is too complex to be entered into here — there are two chief possibilities. One is that the stories were of Scandinavian origin, were carried to England by Scandinavians, and were there made over into the Old English poem. The other, a view held by some scholars who set aside the assumed position of Geatland in Scandinavia, is that the Geats of the poem were not Scandinavian, but a Low German tribe, related to the Angles. This would render it possible that the stories were a racial possession of the Low German settlers, while if they were Scandinavian, the Low Germans would not have taken interest in their hero or his exploits. No difficulty, it may be remarked, is offered by this consideration in supposing them transferred to England at a late date by Scandinavians, for old racial differences would then have been forgotten and the stories would have been accepted on their own merits.

One further possibility may be mentioned which is independent of the main question just discussed, and that is that the assumed confusion of Beowulf and Beowa may have taken place in England. The god Beowa appears in English genealogies, and the names of Beowa and Grendel appear in place-names, and moreover in parts of England not settled by the Danes.

Whatever may be the answers to these questions, it seems certain that various poems forming a cycle treating of Beowulf's life and exploits were known and used by one or more monkish poets to frame an English poem, composed, as certain special evidence indicates, in the Mercian or midland part of England. These poems were originally heathen, and to this is due the mingling of heathen with Christian elements, — the heathen conception of Wyrd, or destiny personified, appearing, for example, beside the Christian conception of a guiding and controlling Providence. Some believe that this is referable simply to an only partial making over of the heathen originals, others that the poet was newly converted to Christianity and that his ideas were therefore a blend of heathen and Christian.

Turning now to the poem, we may ask, What will be our experience in reading it? It is an epic, that is, a narrative poem of elevated character, and we may expect to find that special methods will be used to enforce and sustain the dignity of its theme, as in other epics. The story itself is clear and simple, as well as fine, and we must permit the poet his proper means of giving it substance and relation. References to persons and events we know nothing about must not trouble us, or the stories briefly outlined which are

introduced as episodes. These may seem troublesomely obscure, as in a sense they sometimes are, but we must remember that they concern people and events familiar to those who listened to the poem, and, as we read, we must simply let them shape for us a background of dim, looming figures and fierce feuds and battles, which may serve to give distinctness and atmosphere to the personages and happenings of the main story. Again, we must not think it wrong that Beowulf or Hrothgar or the poet himself should discourse at some length, when there is something to be done of which we wish to hear. Not only are these passages intrinsically fine, but in all epics the introduction of episodes, of speeches, or of the poet's own comment, is necessary to elevate and diversify the narrative, to make clear or to emphasize the character of the personages, or to enforce the importance of the events they take part in. These elements appear in the Homeric poems precisely in the same way as in "Beowulf."

It is sometimes said that the poem is clearer and simpler in the original than in translation. This is partly true. A person reading the original has usually some knowledge of the conditions of life represented. Further, the translations chiefly used are in a modern imitation of the Old English verse-form, and are therefore marred by awkward turns of expression. Also, most prose translations as well as the verse translations make use of unfamiliar words, especially archaic terms, and of turns of phrase not modern in idiom, through too close a rendering of the Old English. But these stumbling-blocks may be avoided; there is no reason why a translation should not be clear.

It is helpful to know something of the conditions of

Old English life. A king or chieftain lives in a hall in a "city" or fortified place, or perhaps in a homestead enclosed with its various buildings by a wall. The king has his band of earls or warriors about him, with perhaps youth at service from other courts. His court includes a herald, a spokesman, and a poet or poets. The older men are his councillors. His warriors are related to him by tribal descent; they are his kinsman-thanes or retainers, bound to do him service to the death, his "close comrades," "companions of his table" or "hearth." He provides them with subsistence, with ale, mead, or wine at the feast, and at the "beer-drinking" the harp is passed about, and songs are sung by those having skill, or by the professional poet. The king or chieftain sits on his "high seat," his retainers on benches or settles beside tables along a dais at the sides, while on the earthen floor in the middle of the hall the fires blaze, the smoke going through openings in the roof. The queen or the king's daughter passes the cup ceremonially about the hall to the warriors, thus showing them honor and ensuring their devoted allegiance. As after a fight the spoils are brought to the king and are at his disposal (though regarded in some sense as a folk-possession), so is he expected to be generous in the hall in giving out treasure (hence, the hall is sometimes called the "ring-hall" or "treasure-hall," and he the "giver of rings"). His gifts may consist of gold in rings, plates, or brooches or other jewels, as collars or armlets, or of swords, burnies (coats of mail of interlocked rings, very precious as costing the smith months of work), helmets, banners, or horses. After the feasting, the king and honored guests go to special sleeping-places: the warriors spread pallets and pillows and stretch

themselves on the mead-benches or floor. The hall is sometimes adorned with hangings. It has a steep roof with broad gables, and the main pillar at each end is carried above the gable-peak, and carved and decorated. Hrothgar's hall "Heorot" ("hart" or "stag") probably bore antlers. Spoils of the chase decked it without, and we are told that it had a golden roof which shone.[1]

War is the chief business of life, and includes the waging of feuds, public or private, the repelling of invaders, and forays for spoils. Courage is the virtue chiefly prized in an earl, either in service at his lord's side, or in doing special exploits and achieving "earlship," that is, proving himself a true earl. Beside courage, generosity and magnanimity, unselfishness, and, in kings and chieftains, justice in rule and a gracious openness and courtesy to inferiors, are qualities exalted and remembered after a man dies. These qualities and their opposites are often referred to in Old English verse to convey praise or dispraise. Kings, warriors, and people are referred to as "valiant," "bold in war," "high-spirited;" a king is "the friendly lord," "lord of men," "ruler over friends," "helmet of his people," "safeguard of warriors," and the like.

[1] The Icelandic sagas refer to gold or gilded roofs, and the reader may recall that in the fairy-tale (of great antiquity) of the man who has the mill that will grind what he wishes, after building his house, he has the mill grind gold plates to cover it. The gold of these roofs may conceivably have been sheet-metal, though in some cases at least the earth was carried up over the roofs of the Icelandic hall. The whitewash used on Celtic stockaded houses, which would shine yellow in the sun, may also be suggested, and I am informed that old Irish tales use both gold and silver in reference to hair as shining or beautiful, irrespective of its actual color.

Such phrases, used partly to give variety and save repeating a name, partly to aid in the verse, are a marked feature of Old English poetry. Poetical synonyms also, usually compounds, implying what a phrase only would fully express, are often used for ideas or things frequently named. Such are "ringed prow" for a ship, "whales' road" or "gannet's bath" for the sea," "shield-bearer" for warrior.[1] Many of these are best rendered in translation by phrases; some, indeed, can only be thus rendered, as, for example, "terror descending unforeseen," "demon of the world aloof," or "coiler into rings," used of the dragon.

Frequent use of archaic terms is not at all necessary, and is specially to be condemned when they are drawn from various periods of English and suggest ideas and social conditions at variance with the spirit and the period of the poem. There is absolutely no excuse for that artificial form of diction made up of true archaic terms, refashionings of words actually obsolete, and un-English turns of expression simulating the archaic, which is known as "Wardour Street English." A few archaic forms and refashionings are, however, helpful and desirable. Those used in the

[1] Others for the ship are "wood" or "sea-wood," "bound prow," "keel;" for the harp, "pleasure-wood," "glee-wood;" the spear, "slaughter-shaft;" the sword, "battle-friend," "ringed-iron;" the burnie or coat of mail, "battle-sark" or shirt, "battle-mesh," "battle-garment;" the visor of a helmet, "battle-mask;" armor, "trappings," "war-gear," "war-weeds" (compare modern "widow's *weeds*"); war, "the battle-play;" the body (the metaphors here as in some of the others are faded), "bone-house," "flesh-clothing." Characteristic locutions of this sort have been retained wherever there seemed to be no danger of their causing the reader difficulty.

translation are so few and simple that they are appended here in a note.[1]

The poem may be read simply for itself as a moving tale of heroic virtue and stirring adventure, or further, — still from an absolute point of view, — as an epic in the world's literature which may be brought into comparison with the Homeric or other heroic poems. But the pleasure it affords will be greatly deepened and enriched, if it is also considered in historic relation to its time as a picture of the heroic age of our ancestors, the life they led, the hopes and desires that swayed them, their way of thinking of things. If the poem is thus considered, one will arrive also at a higher and juster estimate of its artistic value than is possible from the absolute point of view. Mr. W. P. Ker, in his "Epic and Romance," a work the value and delightfulness of which it is impossible to rate too highly, in judging the poem as he does chiefly from the absolute point of view, misses perhaps its chief aim. While recognizing its admirable qualities,[2] he

[1] *Atheling*, also *earl*, a warrior of noble descent; *bale*, harmful evil; *bill*, a sword; *burnie*, a coat of mail; *drake*, also *worm*, a dragon (the use of *worm* is certainly specific and does not mean merely "serpent"); *eoten*, giant; *fiend*, properly foe, when used of Grendel; *gledes*, embers or flying fire (used by Longfellow); *gleeman*, used as a more familiar word both for *glēoman* and *scōp*; *hight*, called; *ness*, a cape, headland, cliff (still in use as *ness* and *naze*); *nicker* (O. E. *nicor*), a sea-monster suggesting the walrus, but supernatural, much as Grendel and his mother are part natural, part demonic; *sark*, the shirt or coat of mail; *scather*, one who works scathe or harm, a spoiler; *thane*, a follower, retainer.

[2] Though, he says, nothing except the killing of dragons is more common than the killing of monsters like Grendel, and though it is difficult to give epic dignity to such commonplaces, this is, nevertheless, accomplished. *Beowulf* has the compre-

criticises it, and rightly, as not possessing unity of plot or action, the dragon story being a disconnected addition to the main narrative. "It is," he says, "impossible to reduce the poem of 'Beowulf' to the scale of Aristotle's Odyssey without revealing the faults of structure in the English poem: —

"A man in want of work goes abroad to the house of a certain king troubled by Harpies, and having accomplished the purification of the house returns home with honour. Long afterwards, having become king in his own country, he kills a dragon, but is at the same time choked by the venom of it. His people lament for him and build his tomb.

"Aristotle made a summary of the Homeric poem, because he wished to show how simple its construction really was, apart from the episodes. It is impossible, by any process of reduction and simplification, to get rid of the duality in 'Beowulf.'" But it should be noted that unity of action of this sort was not the aim of the Anglo-Saxon poet or poets who framed the poem. The unity aimed at was the presentation of the life of the hero as a whole. When this is perceived, an artistic propriety and skill of arrangement is discovered, sur-

hensive power, the inclusion of various aspects, the faculty of changing the mood of a story, characteristic of the true epic. Also, "it keeps its hold on what went before and what is to come. Its construction is solid, not flat. It is exposed to the attractions of all kinds of subordinate and partial literature, — the fairy story, the conventional romance, the pathetic legend, — and it escapes them all by taking them all up as moments, as episodes and points of view, governed by the conception, or the comprehension, of some of the possibilities of human character in a certain form of society. It does not impose any one view on the reader; it gives what it is the proper task of the higher kind of fiction to give, the play of life in different moods and under different aspects."

prising when the period of the poem is taken into account. A description of his famous ancestry introduces us to Hrothgar, and we learn how he built his lordly hall, Heorot, and then of the enduring grief and affliction caused by Grendel's visitations. The hero of the poem appears, now that all is made ready, and we hear of his youth and prowess and matchless qualities in the episode of the contest with Breca, introduced with great dramatic skill through the taunting questions of the jealous Hunferth. Beowulf kills the monsters, and sails away. We learn incidentally of Hygelac's death, of Beowulf's refusal of the throne, and of his guardianship of Heardred, till Heardred dies and Beowulf becomes king. The final episode gives the crowning act of his life, — his noble death in defence of his people. When the poem is viewed in this way, it is evident that though the action may be dual, the poet's aim afforded it a true unity. His design was to portray the character of a hero, brave, generous, magnanimous, considerate in word and deed, setting forth his life from youth to death and holding him up as an ideal warrior and king for admiration and emulation.

It has been said that the poem is somewhat uneven in poetic quality, and this would naturally be so, considering the method of its composition from separate lays. But on the whole its composition has been done with skill. The interpolation of passages Christian in character does not injure it, and they are, moreover, themselves poetry of no mean order. As regards passages of special merit, it is hardly necessary to point the reader to the story of the killing of Grendel's mother. While, as Mr. Ker says, the fight with Grendel, grim and unrelieved, has within it the ele-

ments of mortal terror, that with Grendel's mother touches on other motives: "The terror is further away from human habitations, and it is accompanied with a charm and a beauty, the beauty of the Gorgon, such as is absent from the first adventure." Nor is it necessary to point the reader to the description of the mere in which the monster lives as a passage that stands out in our early literature in the quality of its romantic inspiration.

It is not possible to dwell upon the minor resources of the poet's art, — for example, his use of vivid, pregnant words and the variety and skilful interchange of his descriptive phrases. No one, it may be added, who has studied "Beowulf" with care, will be able to think of the poem as primitive or unpolished, or to consider it fashioned by a crude poetic impulse and not with a conscious aim to satisfy a definite artistic ideal.

In regard to the question of the use of metre in translation as compared with prose, the opinion must frankly be expressed that there is no choice between prose and the Old English verse. Blank verse, which has had at least one advocate to push its claims with conviction, Mr. Prosser Frye, cannot in the hands of the average translator be anything else than an imitation of the Elizabethan, Miltonic, or Tennysonian blank verse, or a mingling of them in streaks and spots like a marbled end-paper. The hexameter and the alexandrine, and blank verse also, are wholly out of keeping because of their associations and suggestions. It is of course impossible to say what a true poet-translator might do with these magnificent instruments even in translating Old English verse — as witness, to draw a remote parallel, the recent astonishing rendering of the "Odyssey" into *rubáiyát*, which con-

founds the amazed reader by its felicity. But a true poet might as well, in fact far better, use the Old English verse-form ; it has its own magnificent possibilities. He who essays the "Beowulf" in this metre, be he proser or poet, must certainly expect to give no short period of time to a task so arduous, if he is to achieve anything like success. To say this is to cast no discredit upon the conscientious attempts that have hitherto been made, though it is to be regretted that the only translation with which the name of a poet of note is associated, that by William Morris and Mr. Wyatt, is disfigured and rendered obscure by the use of pseudo-archaisms which are almost equally objectionable when viewed from either a philologic or a literary standpoint.

For the benefit of the reader who is unfamiliar with Old English, the opening passage of the poem is given, corresponding to the page of the manuscript reproduced as frontispiece, and a rendering (which makes no pretence to inspiration) is attempted in the Old English verse-form, in the hope of giving some suggestion of its movement.[1]

[1] The Old English verse is made up of two half lines separated by a cæsura, linked by alliteration, marking the chief stresses, the normal line having either one or two words or syllables in the first half line alliterating with each other and with a single word or syllable in the second half line. All vowels may alliterate with one another.

In reading the Old English (and this note applies also to the names in the translation), pronounce the vowels in general as in Latin, except that *æ* is pronounced like *a* in *man*, and the *y* approximately like French *u*. The letter *þ* represents the sound now spelled *th*. *Cg*, as in *Ecgtheow*, should be pronounced *dj*, and *sc*, as in *Æschere*, like our *sh*.

The "Hwæt!" at the opening of the poem is an exclamation calling for silence from the hearers.

Hwæt! wē Gār-Dena
þēod-cyninga
hū þā æþelingas
Oft Scyld Scēfing
monegum mæġþum,
Egsode earl,
fēa-sceaft funden;
wēox under wolcnum,
oþ þæt him æġhwylc
ofer hron-rāde
gomban gyldan.

in gēar-dagum
þrym gefrūnon,
ellen fremedon.
sceaþena þrēatum,
meodo-setla oftēah.
syþþan ærest wearþ
hē þæs frōfre gebād,
weorþ-myndum þāh,
þāra ymb-sittendra
hȳran scolde,
þæt wæs gōd cyning!

Lo! Of the Spear-Danes in days long sped,
Of the lords of that folk, have we learned the glory,
How deeds of daring were done by their athelings.
Oft Scyld Scefing from scathers thronging,
From many a people, their mead-seats reft.
Fear befell of the earl, after first, for their finding,
He came all helpless. Requital he knew for it,
Waxed 'neath the welkin, in worship throve,
Till each and every earl that dwelt nigh him,
Over the whale-path, must hearken his word,
And tribute pay him. He was truly a good king!

It must not be supposed, because the hero and the scene of the poem are not English, that it is in any sense not an English poem. In the social conditions it depicted, the ideals it presented, it was, in its own time, thoroughly English; the Anglo-Saxon was not conscious that he was listening to a piece of "foreign literature." It is not a mere rendering or adaptation of the original songs; they were substantially made over by the Old English poet or poets, — the greater number of the Christian references, for example, are brief and an essential part of its fabric. Though telling of events of which the poet or poets "heard tell," it is an integral product, save for one or two evident and awkward interpolations. As has been frequently

pointed out, both the form and spirit of the poem are definitely not Scandinavian. Whatever the origin of the poems from which it was made, it is a true part of our literature. At the same time right to possession and pride in it, in a very real sense, must be freely conceded to all Teutonic peoples.

Those not professionally engaged in the study of English literature are likely to have but little conception how much of our Old English poetry — the poetry prior to the Norman Conquest — is still extant, or to appreciate its worth. We are rich despite our losses, and that which is left to us is amply sufficient to attest the poetic aspiration, the native poetic gift, the love for poetry, of our forefathers. This poetry, early though it is, displays true elevation, and sometimes enthusiasm. It possesses intrinsic dignity. Apart from the worthiness of theme and the distinction and appeal resulting from artistic treatment, which are the sole essentials of true literature, it expresses the best of the national life, of the national character. It embodies and exalts virtues strong in the English race then and to-day. And this may appear even in the unassuming simplicity of a prose translation of the brave story of the heroic warrior and blameless king, Beowulf the Geat.

BEOWULF

Of Scyld Scefing (from whom Hrothgar sprang, whom Beowulf befriended) and his death.

Lo! We have heard tell of the might in days of old of the Spear-Danes' folk-kings, how deeds of prowess were wrought by the athelings. Oft Scyld Scefing reft away their mead-benches from the throngs of his foes, from many a people. Fear came of the earl, after he was found at the first in his need. Redress he won for that, waxed under the clouds, throve in his glories, till of them that dwelt nigh him over the whale-road, each must obey him, and pay him tribute. That was a good king!

To him in after time a son was born, young in his courts, whom God sent for a help to the people, for he saw the dire need they had suffered long time till then through lack of a leader; for this the Lord of Life, the King of Glory, gave him honor in the world. Renowned was Beowulf; the fame of the son of Scyld spread wide in the Scedelands. In such wise worthily among his father's friends by goodly gifts of gold must a man in his youth so prevail that in old age, when war shall come, willing comrades may cleave to their lord and do him service; among every people a man shall thrive by deeds of praise.

Then, at the hour of his fate, in fulness of valor, Scyld went his way. They bare him forth to the sea-

flood, his own close comrades, as he had himself bidden them, the while he, the Scyldings' friend, the land's dear lord, long time held sway by his word. There at the haven stood the ringed prow, the atheling's ship, gleaming and eager to start. They laid him down then, their lord beloved, the ring-giver, in the ship's bosom, placed the mighty one at the mast.

Much treasure was there, trappings of price from far-off lands. Never heard I of keel fitted out more bravely with weapons of war and weeds of battle, with bills and with burnies. A heap of jewels lay in his bosom that must needs fare far with him into the grip of the flood. Truly with no less gift-offerings and folk-treasures did they in this wise dispose him than they that at his birth sent him forth alone on the waves, being but a child. Thereto they set for him a golden standard high overhead, let the wave bear him, gave him to the deep. Sorrow of soul was theirs and mood of mourning. Men dwelling in halls, heroes under heaven, cannot in truth say who came by that lading.

I. *Of Beowulf, Scyld's son (of the same name as Beowulf the Geat, whose deeds are hereafter told), and his succession; of Hrothgar and the building of his hall, Heorot; and of the monster, Grendel, and his wrath at the rejoicing there, and of his descent from the brood of Cain.*

For long thereafter in the walled towns was Beowulf, the loved folk-king of the Scyldings, known to fame among the peoples (his father had gone elsewhere, the prince from his own), till in time was born to him the great Healfdene, who, whilst he lived, ruled the Scyldings in kindness, the ancient one, fierce in battle.

To him, leader of battle-hosts, four children were

born into the world, which were, told in order, Heorogar, and Hrothgar, and Halga the Brave, while Sigeneow, as I have heard say, was Sæwela's queen, the valorous Scylfing's beloved bed-sharer. Fortune in battle was given then to Hrothgar and fame in war, so that, by the time the youth grew of age, his dear kinsfolk, a great following of young warriors, obeyed him gladly.

It came to his mind to bid men build him a hall-dwelling, a mead-house, greater than children of men had ever heard of, and that there within it he would part to young and old what God had given him, save the people's land and the lives of men. Then, as I heard, on many a kindred far and wide through the mid-earth was the task laid of making fair the folk-hall. Speedily it befell him in time among men that it was in every wise ready, the greatest of hall-houses, and he made for it, who far and wide held sway by his word, the name of Heorot. He belied not his pledge and dealt out rings and treasure at the feast. The hall rose lofty and broad-gabled. Warring surges it awaited of loathly flame, nor was it long before deadly hate must awaken through the murderous strife of son and father-in-law.

Then the demon fell, that dwelt in darkness, scarce for a space endured that he should hear each day rejoicing loud in the hall; there was sound of the harp there and clear song of the gleeman. One spake that knew how to tell of man's first making of old, said that the Almighty framed the world, the plain bright in beauty which the waters encircle, and, glorying in His handiwork, set the sun and moon to lighten the earth-dwellers, and decked the corners of the earth with boughs and leaves, and gave life to every kind

of creature that walks alive. So the warriors lived in joy and plenty, till one, a fiend of hell, began to do evil. The grim demon, the fell prowler about the borders of the homes of men, who held the moors, the fens, and the fastnesses, was called Grendel. In the domain of the giant-race, Cain, the man reft of joy, dwelt for a time, after the Creator had doomed him. On his posterity the Eternal Lord took vengeance for the murder, in that he slew Abel. God took no joy in that feud, but banished him, for his deed, far from mankind. By him were the wanton ones all begotten, the eotens and elves and monsters of the deep, the giants also who strove long against God — for that He repaid them in due requital.

II. *How Grendel ravaged Heorot, and caused it to remain unused and desolate at night; of the long continuance of this evil, and how Hrothgar and his people despaired of succor.*

Then went Grendel, when night had come, to spy about the high house and see how the Ring-Danes had left it after the beer-drinking. There he found the company of athelings sleeping after the feast; sorrow they knew not, or the evil haps of men. The baneful wight, grim and greedy, fierce and pitiless, was soon alert, and took, where they rested, thirty thanes. Thence fared he back homeward, boastfully exultant over his spoil, and sought his abiding-places with that glut of slaughter.

Thereupon at dawn, with break of day, plain enough to the warriors was Grendel's might in strife. Then was weeping upraised after all their glad feasting, a great cry at dawn. When they had seen the track of the loathly one, the woeful demon, the prince renowned, the atheling passing good, sat joyless, under-

went heaviness of grief, suffered sorrow for his thanes; too sore was that trouble, too hateful and lingering. Nor was it longer than after one night that Grendel again wrought murderous destruction still more grievous, nor recked of the violence and evil — too fixed was he in them. It was easy then finding one who sought a place of rest for himself farther away, a bed apart from the buildings, now that the hate of that thane of hell had been shown and truly declared by a clear token; he kept himself farther away from then on, and in some safer place, that might escape the demon.

Thus had Grendel mastery and warred against the right, he alone against all, till the fairest of houses stood idle. A great while it was, twelve winters' season, that the friend of the Scyldings endured this trouble, every woe, the utmost of sorrow. In due course thereafter it became known openly to the children of men through songs sorrowfully, that Grendel had striven for a time against Hrothgar, waged for many half-years a ruthless war, ceaseless strife, evil, and violence, nor would in peaceful wise lift the deadly doom from any man of the might of the Danes, nor durst any even among the worshipful ones look for better fortune at the slayer's hands. The grisly monster, the dark death-shadow, rested not in pursuit of young and old, lay in wait and made ambush. Night after night he held the misty moors; men know not whither the creatures of hell will walk on their rounds.

In this wise, often, the enemy of mankind, the lonely one terrible, wrought many an outrage, deeds that shamed them hard to bear. On dark nights he stayed in Heorot, the hall brave with gold, yet he might

not touch the gift-stool — its treasures he scorned — nor knew he desire for it.

That was a great grief and sorrow of heart to the friend of the Scyldings. Many a one strong in council oft sat deliberating; counsel they devised what with bold hearts it were best to do against the terror descending unforeseen. Sometimes they vowed offerings in their temples of idols, besought with words of prayer that the slayer of demons would find relief for the people's sorrow. Such was their custom, the trust of the heathen; the thoughts of their breasts were intent on hell, the Creator they knew not — knew not the judge of men's deeds, the Lord God, nor truly knew they how to praise the Guardian of the Heavens, the King of Glory. Woe shall be his who needs must through his fierce frowardness thrust down his soul into the bosom of the fire, look for no comfort, in no wise return; well shall it be for him that may, after the day of death, seek out the Lord and plead for peace in the Father's bosom.

III. *Of Beowulf the Geat and his coming to rid Hrothgar of Grendel.*

Thus then without ceasing the son of Healfdene brooded his season of sorrow. The wise warrior might not amend his woes; too sore was the strife, the dire distress, greatest of evils of the night, that had come on the people, too hateful and lingering. Of this and Grendel's deeds, the thane of Hygelac, of goodly fame among the Geats, heard tell when from home. Strongest in might of manhood was he in this life's day, noble and powerful. He bade be fitted for himself a good sea-goer, said he would seek out the war-king, the mighty prince over the swan-road, seeing he had need of men. Men deemed wise blamed him no

whit for that journey, dear though he was to them. They spurred on the valiant-minded hero, and sought signs for casting his fortune.

He, the worthy one, took to himself picked warriors of the Geat-folk, the boldest he might find. One of fifteen, he set out for the sea-wood. A man skilled in the sea pointed out the landmarks. Time went on, the ship was on the wave, the boat beneath the bluff. The warriors ready went up on the prow. The currents of the sea eddied along the shore. The warsmen bare their bright trappings, war-gear splendrous, into the bosom of the vessel. The men shoved out the well-joined wood on its willing journey. Then went over the billowy sea, sped by the wind, the foamy-necked ship, likest to a bird, till next day at the hour awaited the curved prow had gone so far that the seafarers might see the land, the shore-cliffs gleam, the broad sea-nesses. Then was the ocean-farer at end of its voyage.

Thereupon the folk of the Weders stepped up quickly on the plain and tied the sea-wood; their sarks rattled, their weeds of war. God they thanked because the wave-paths had proved easy for them. Then from the steep shore, the warden of the Scyldings, whose duty it was to keep watch of the sea-cliffs, saw them bear over the bulwarks their shining shields and gear ready as for battle. He was fretted in his mind's thought with the wish to know what men they were. The thane of Hrothgar went riding, therefore, on his horse to the shore; stoutly he shook the mighty shaft in his hands, asked in words duly considered: "What men are ye having battle-gear, clad in burnies, who thus come leading a deep ship hither over the sea-road, over the waters? I have long been bound-

ary warden, kept watch of the shore, that no foe with a ship's company might work harm in the land of the Danes. No bearers of shields ever undertook to come hither more openly; surely you had not leave from the wagers of war, the consent of the kinsfolk. Never saw I in the world a greater earl or warrior in harness, than is one of you. No lurker at home in the hall is he, with weapons bedight, save his looks and matchless aspect lie. Now must I learn of what blood ye are, ere ye fare further as false spies into the Danes' land. Hear ye now, ye seafaring ones, dwelling afar, my plain thought; it is best most quickly to make known whence ye come."

IV. *How Beowulf made known his race and errand to the coast-guard and was bidden go to Hrothgar.*

To him the most worshipful one, the leader of the company, spake in answer: "We are of the kin of the Geat-folk and Hygelac's hearth-companions. My father, Ecgtheow by name, the noble high-prince, was known to the peoples. He bided years a many ere he went hoary from his home. Every man of wise mind far and wide remembereth him well. We have come with kind intent to seek thy lord, the son of Healfdene, the people's protector. Be thou good in advising us. We have a weighty errand to the famed lord of the Danes, nor shall any part of it, as I ween, be kept hid. Thou knowest if it be so, as we have truly heard tell, that among the Scyldings a secret foe, I know not what of spoilers, giveth on dark nights proof of hate beyond the knowing through the terror he worketh, through fell deeds and death-fall. I, therefore, out of largeness of soul may counsel Hrothgar, how he, the wise one and good, may master the foe, if that ever the press of his troubles may know change,

solace come after, and the waves of care grow cooler, else he shall suffer this season of sorrow forever, stress of need, so long as in its high place shall stand the fairest of houses."

The warden spake, the fearless retainer, where he sat on his horse: "Of each of these, of words and works, must an able warrior who judgeth well know the difference. I gather that this fellowship is of true thought toward the lord of the Scyldings. Bear forth then your weapons and gear. I shall guide you, and likewise bid my war-thanes keep in due charge from any foe your ship, the newly tarred vessel, on the shore, till that the bent-necked wood bear back the hero beloved, over the sea-streams, to the bounds of the Weders. To a wager of war such as he will it be given to come out unhurt from this bout of battle."

Then went they to him. The ship stayed without moving; the broad-beamed craft rested on its cable at anchor. The graven boars shone over their gold-decked cheek-guards, gleaming and tempered in the fire; grimly warlike of temper, the boar kept his watch. The men hastened on; they went together till they might see, splendid and covered with gold, the timbered house where the king dwelt, that was among earth-dwellers famed beyond all others of halls under heaven, — the sheen of it flashed over many lands. Then the bold one in battle showed them the home of brave men where it shone, that they might go to it straightway; he, one from among its warsmen, turned his horse and word spake after: "It is time for me to go. May the Father Almighty through His grace keep you safe in your goings. I will to the sea to keep watch for unfriendly folk."

V. *Of Beowulf's coming to Heorot, and its announcement to Hrothgar.*

The street was cobbled; it showed the men the way as they went together. The war-burnie gleamed, hard and hand-linked, the bright-ringed iron sang in their harness, as they then first came faring to the hall in their trappings of terror.

Spent with the sea, they set up their broad shields, their well-hardened bucklers against the wall of the hall, and bowed them to the benches; their burnies and war-gear rang. The spears, the seamen's weapons, stood in one place together with the shafts of ash-wood gray above; the mailed band was well dight with weapons. A proud warrior then asked the warsmen, where they sat, of what kin they were: "Whence bear ye your shields covered with gold, your gray battle-sarks, and helmets grim, your heap of battle-shafts. I am Hrothgar's herald and serving-man. Never saw I, of stranger folk, thus many men of more valiant bearing. I ween in proud daring, not as driven to exile but through greatness of soul, have ye sought Hrothgar."

Him then the proud prince of the Weders, strong in might, answered, and word spake after: "We are Hygelac's table-comrades. Beowulf is my name. I will tell thy lord, the mighty prince, the son of Healfdene, mine errand, if he will grant us, good as he is, to give him greeting."

Wulfgar spake; he was prince of the Wendles; his boldness of heart, his prowess and wisdom were known unto many: "I will ask the mighty prince, the giver of rings, the lord of the Scyldings, friend of the Danes, as thou desirest, concerning thine errand, and quickly make known to thee the answer he of his goodness thinketh to give me."

He turned him then quickly where Hrothgar sat, old and with hair exceeding white, among his band of earls. The valiant one went till he stood at the shoulder of the lord of the Danes, for he knew the ways of men of gentle birth. Wulfgar spake to his gracious lord: "Hither have fared over the ocean-stretches, come from afar, men of the Geats. The warriors name the foremost man among them Beowulf. They pray, my lord, that they may exchange speech with thee. Make thou not denial, O Hrothgar, to gladden them with thy converse. They seem from their war-gear worthy of the respect of earls; the leader at least, who hath led these warsmen hither, is surely goodly."

VI. *How Hrothgar bade the Geats be welcome, and Beowulf told his errand.*

Hrothgar, helm of the Scyldings, spake: "I knew him as a child. His father of old was named Ecgtheow; to him Hrethel the Geat at his home gave his only daughter. Boldly now hath his son come hither, and sought out a true friend. The seafaring ones when they carried thither to the Geats costly gifts for friendly remembrance brought word that he, the bold one in war, had in his hand-grip the strength of thirty. Him, I have hope, the Holy God has sent us West-Danes of His grace for aid against dread of Grendel. Gifts must I tender the good youth for his brave spirit. Make haste and bid the band of kinsmen come in together. Say to them also in fitting words they are welcome among the Dane-folk."

Then Wulfgar went to the door of the hall, stood there and spake: "My lord, the victorious prince of the East-Danes bids me tell you he knoweth your high kinship, and that ye in his sight, ye bold in heart, are welcome hither over the sea-waves. Now may ye

go in your war-gear, under your battle-masks, to see Hrothgar. Let your war-shields and spears, shafts for the killing, abide here the outcome of your converse."

Then the mighty one arose with many a man about him, a press of doughty thanes. Some remained there, as the brave one bade them, kept watch of the war-gear. Together they went speedily where the hero directed, under Heorot's roof.

The bold one went, stern beneath his helmet, till he stood within. Beowulf spake — the network of the burnie, linked by the smith's craft, gleamed upon him: "Hail to thee, Hrothgar! I am Hygelac's kinsman and war-thane. I have already in my youth essayed many deeds of prowess. To me openly were Grendel's doings made known in the land of my people. Sea-faring men say that this hall, the fairest of dwellings, stands idle and useless to all, so soon as the evening's light becometh hid 'neath the bright heaven. Then did wise men, Lord Hrothgar, the worthiest of my people, counsel that I seek thee, for they knew the strength of my might, saw it for themselves when I came from battle, blood-stained from the foe, where I bound five of them, overthrew the race of eotens, and slew the nickers by night in the waves — suffered perilous straits, repaid the hate shown the Weders (woes they endured!), put an end to their sorrows. And now I, by my single hand, shall bring Grendel, the demon, the giant one, to judgment. I desire now therefore, prince of the Bright-Danes, to ask thee one boon. Refuse me not, guardian of warriors, loved friend of the people, now I am come from so far, that I alone with my band of earls, my body of brave men, may cleanse Heorot. I have also learned that the monster in his recklessness takes no thought to use weapons: I then,

so may my liege-lord, Hygelac, find pleasure in me, shall think scorn to bear sword or the broad shield, yellow-rimmed, to the battle, but with my hand-grip shall I join with the fiend and fight to the death, foe against foe. He must there, whom death taketh, believe it the Lord's award. I ween that Grendel, if he prevail, shall feast undismayed on the Geat-folk in the war-hall, as he hath oft done on the might of the Hreth-men. Thou shalt not need then to hide my head away; for Grendel will have me, stained with blood, if death take me, will bear away the bloody corse and think to devour it; he, the lone-goer, will eat it ungrieving, and smear with my blood his moor-lairs; no longer shalt thou need then to care for my body's nurture. Send to Hygelac, if warfare take me, the best of battle-weeds, goodliest of garments, that guards my breast — it was the bequest of Hrethla, and the handwork of Weland. Wyrd goeth ever as she must!"

VII. *Of Hrothgar's answer, telling of Grendel, and of the feasting.*

Hrothgar, helm of the Scyldings, spake: "To be a bulwark of defence and a prop hast thou sought us, my friend Beowulf. Thy father waged the greatest of feuds; with his own hand he slew Heatholaf among the Wulfings. Then might not the kin of the Weders hold to him for fear of war. Thence sought he the folk of the South-Danes, the Honor-Scyldings, over the moil of the waves, when I first ruled the Dane-folk and held in my youth the treasure-city of heroes; it was when Heorogar, my elder brother, Healfdene's child, had died and was no more living — a better man was he than I. Afterward, I settled the feud for money, sending ancient treasure to the Wulfings over the back of the waters; oaths your father sware to me.

"Sorrow it is to me in soul to say to any man what despite and instant evil Grendel hath wrought me in Heorot through his malice. My hall-company, my band of warsmen, is minished; Wyrd swept them away into the horror that compasseth Grendel. God may readily stay the mad spoiler in his deeds. Full often boasted my warsmen drunken with beer, over their ale-horns, that they in the beer-hall with their dread blades would await a meeting with Grendel. Then was the mead-hall, this lordly dwelling, at morning-tide, when day grew light, stained with gore, all the bench-boards besprent with blood, the hall with the bloodshed; wherefore I had so many the fewer true thanes, warriors beloved, as death took away. Sit now to the feasting and unfold to my men thy purpose and hope of success, as thy mind may prompt thee."

Then was a bench set for the Geatmen in the hall all together. There the strong-hearted ones went to sit, in excellence of might. A thane looked to the task set him, to bear in his hands the fretted ale-stoup, and poured out the shining mead. Now and again the gleeman sang clear in Heorot. There was joy among the warriors, a worshipful company by no means small of Danes and Weders.

VIII. *How Hunferth, angered by the honor paid Beowulf, asked concerning his swimming-match with Breca, in which, so he says, Beowulf was overmatched, and how Beowulf answered him.*

Hunferth, the son of Ecglaf, who sat at the feet of the lord of the Scyldings, spake and unloosed hidden cause of strife; great heart-burning was his because of the journey of Beowulf, the bold seafarer, for that he could not brook that any other man should

ever win more of honors in the mid-earth under heaven than himself: "Art thou that Beowulf that strove against Breca, didst vie with him in swimming on the broad sea, when ye twain didst try the billows, and out of mad boastfulness risked your lives in the deep waters? Not any man, loved or loathed, might wean ye from your hazardous venture. So ye swam on the sea, covered the sea-streams with your arms, measured the sea-ways, smote with your hands, and glided over the ocean. The ocean was swollen with billows in winter's flood. In the grip of the waters ye toiled seven nights. He overmastered thee in the swimming, had the greater might. Then at morning-tide the sea bare him up among the Heatharemes, whence, dear to his people, he sought his loved home, the land of the Brondings, the fair city of peace where he had his folk, his walled town, and treasure. The son of Beanstan truly fulfilled all his boast against thee. Therefore I foresee for thee a worse outcome, a strife more grim, though thou wast ever strong in the storm of battle, if thou durst for the space of a night-time abide nigh Grendel."

Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spake: "Look ye, friend Hunferth, thou hast talked, drunken with beer, more than a plenty about Breca, and told of his venture. The truth I shall tell, that I had more endurance in the sea, strength in the waves, than any other man. We said when we were children, and made a vaunt of it — we were both of us still in our youth — that we would hazard our lives out upon the ocean, and it was thus we fulfilled it. We held our stout swords bare in our hands as we swam in the sea, for we thought to guard ourselves against the whale-fishes. No whit might he swim ahead of me on the waves of

the flood, or more swiftly in the deep; nor would I from him. We were together in the sea the space of five nights, till the flood and the rising waves, coldest of weather and night closing down in mist, drave us apart, and the north-wind, battle-fierce, came against us. Rough were the waves. The fierceness of the sea-fishes was stirred up; then was my body-sark, hard and hand-linked, a help to me against the foes; my woven battle-garment, worked with gold, lay on my breast. A fell spoiler in his wrath dragged me to the bottom, held me fast, the grim one, in his grip. Yet it was given me with my point, with my war-sword, to reach the monster. The strife did away with the mighty sea-beast by my hand."

IX. *Of the outcome of Beowulf's match with Breca, and how the hall was given over in charge to Beowulf by Hrothgar.*

"Thus the loathly raveners ceased not to press me sore. I served them as was right with my sword of price. In no wise had they joy, those workers of evil, of a full meal, to seize on me and sit round to the feast nigh the sea-bottom, for on the morrow, wounded by thrusts, slain by the sword-strokes, they lay up along the sea-beach, so might they never again stay the seafarers on their way about the deep crossing.

"Light came in the east, the bright beacon of God, the waves went down, so that I might see the sea-nesses, the windy walls. Wyrd oft spareth one not marked for death, if his courage be good. Be that as it may, it was mine to slay nine nickers with the sword. Never heard I tell at night of a harder fight 'neath the vault of heaven, nor of man in worse plight in the sea-streams. Yet I got off with my life from the grip of my foes, though worn with my faring.

Then the sea-flood in its streaming, the tossing billows, bare me on to the Finns' land.

"Never heard I aught of like shrewd affrays, terror of sword-play, on thy part. Never did Breca yet, or either of you, achieve in the sport of battle deed so daring with blood-stained blades (I make little boast of it), though thou wert the slayer of thine own brethren, thy chief of kin; for that thou shalt suffer thy doom in hell, whatever thy cunning. I tell thee truly, son of Ecglaf, that Grendel, the monster abhorred, would never have wrought so many horrid deeds and shameful harm in Heorot toward thy lord, were thy mind and soul so shrewdly fierce, as thou thyself dost say. But he hath found he need not dread overmuch the enmity or fierce onslaught of your people, the Victor-Scyldings. He taketh toll by force, spareth none of the Dane-folk, warreth after his lust, killeth and eateth, nor looketh for reprisal from the Spear-Danes. But the strength and prowess of the Geats shall now bid him to battle. He that may shall go afterwards proudly to the mead-drinking, when the morning-light of another day, the sun clad in brightness, shall shine forth from the south o'er the children of men."

Then the lord of the Bright-Danes, giver of treasure, gray-haired and battle-famed, was assured of succor; the shepherd of the people gave ear to Beowulf's fixed intent. There was laughter of heroes; the uproar of it sounded forth; joyous was their converse.

Wealhtheow, the queen, in her deckings of gold, went forth, mindful of courtly custom. She greeted the men in the hall, and then, as wife free-born, gave the cup first to the noble warden of the East-Danes, bade him, beloved by his people, be blithe at the beer-

drinking. He, the king famed for victory, in gladness partook of the feast and the hall-cup. Then the lady of the Helmings went about to old and young in every part, gave the gemmed beaker till the time came the proud-thoughted queen, decked with her diadem, should bring the mead-cup to Beowulf. She greeted the Lord of the Geats and thanked God with wisely-ordered words that her wish was fulfilled, in that she might put her trust in some one of earls for help in her troubles.

The warrior fierce in the fight drank of the cup at the hands of Wealhtheow, and then, made eager for the fray, gan speak in formal wise; Beowulf, son of Ecgtheow, spake: "This I purposed, when I went up on the deep, boarded the sea-craft with my fellowship, that I should either work the will of your people wholly, or fall in the fray, fast in the fiend's grip. Either will I do deeds befitting my birth or meet my last day in this mead-hall." These words, the vaunt of the Geat, pleased the lady. In her deckings of gold, she passed on to sit, the free-born folk-queen, beside her lord.

Then again, as erstwhile, was brave speech spoken in the hall. In gladness were the people. The uproar rose of the victor-folk, till that the son of Healfdene had a mind suddenly to seek his evening's rest, for he knew that an onslaught was purposed on the high hall by the monster, so soon as they might no more see the sun's light, or night growing dusk over all, and creatures of the shadow-helm should come stalking, dark beneath the sky. The company all arose. Then Hrothgar greeted Beowulf, one warrior another, in set speech, wished him safe outcome, overmastery of the wine-hall, and spake this word: "Never, since I might

lift hand or shield, have I ever given over in trust this mighty house of the Danes to any of men, save now to thee. Have now and hold this fairest of houses, bear thy greatness in mind, make known the might of thy prowess, watch against the foe. No lack shall be thine of things worth the having, if thou come forth with thy life from this mighty task."

X. *How Beowulf kept watch for Grendel.*

Then Hrothgar, lord of the Scyldings, went him forth from the hall with his troop of warriors. The warrior-leader would go to his rest with Wealhtheow, his wife. The Kingly Glory had set, as men have heard, a guard against Grendel in the hall. A charge apart he held in respect to the lord of the Danes, kept ward for the giant one.

Truly, the prince of the Geats put ready trust in his bold might and the Lord's grace. He took off him then his iron burnie, his helm from his head, gave his richly-chased sword, choicest of blades, to his serving-thane, and bade the man keep his war-gear. Ere he mounted his bed, spake Beowulf, the worthy one of the Geats, a vaunting word: "In no wise count I myself less in battle-crafts and deeds of war than Grendel himself. Therefore I will not with the sword slay him and take his life, though the might is mine wholly. These helps — to strike at me and hew my shield — he knows not, daring though he be in deeds of malice. But we, this night, if he dare seek strife without weapons, shall lay aside the sword. And, at the end, may the wise God, the Holy Lord, award the mastery on either hand as seemeth Him meet."

Then the brave one in battle laid him down, the head-pillow received the earl's cheek, and about him many a hardy seafarer bowed him to his hall-rest.

No one of them thought that he thereafter should ever again seek his loved home, his people, or the free town where he was reared, seeing they had heard tell that, ere then, a murderous death had taken off too many by far of the Dane-folk in the wine-hall. But the Lord gave them the destiny to speed in the strife, help and aid to the people of the Weders, such that they all overcame their foe through one man's strength, the might of himself alone. The truth is made known that the Mighty God ruleth mankind from everlasting.

In the dark night came striding the walker in shadow. Those set to watch, that should guard the gabled hall, slept, all save one. It was known to men the fell spoiler might not, if the Lord willed not, swing them under the shadow. But that single one, watching in flush of wrath with swelling anger, bided the award of battle.

XI. *Of the coming of Grendel, and of Beowulf's encounter with him.*

Then from the moor, from under the misty fells, came Grendel striding; God's wrath he bare. The fell spoiler planned to trap one of the race of men in the high hall. Under the clouds he went till he might see without trouble the wine-hall, the treasure-house of men, brave with gold. It was not the first time he had sought the home of Hrothgar; never, though, before or since in the days of his life found he hall-thanes more doughty. Came then making his way to the hall the warring one severed from joy. The door, fastened with bands forged in the fire, soon gave way when he laid hold of it with his hands; bent on evil, puffed up with wrath as he was, he brake open the mouth of the hall. Quickly then the fiend trod in on the shining floor, strode on, fierce of mood. An un-

lovely light, likest to flame, stood in his eyes. He saw in the hall many warriors sleeping, a fellowship of one blood assembled together, the throng of kinsfolk. Then his heart laughed within him. He thought, the grisly monster, ere day came, to sunder life from body of each of them, for hope of a fill of feasting had come to him. But no longer was it fate's decree that he might, after that night, feed on more of the race of men.

The kinsman of Hygelac, strong in might, watched how the fell spoiler was of mind to set about his sudden onslaughts. The monster thought not to be long about it, but for a first start seized quickly on a sleeping thane, tore him taken unawares, bit into his bone-frame, drank the blood from the veins, and swallowed him down piece by piece. Soon he had bolted all the lifeless body, hand and foot. He stepped forward nearer, took next in his hands the hero, bold of heart, on his bed. The fiend reached for him with his claw, but he grasped it with set purpose, and threw his weight on Grendel's arm. Soon found that herder of evils that never in any other man, in any corner of the earth, had he met with mightier hand-grip. He was affrighted mind and heart, yet might he make off none the sooner. His one thought was to get him gone; he was minded to flee into the darkness, to seek the drove of devils. There was then for him no such doings as he before that, in earlier days, had fallen in with.

Remembered then the good kinsman of Hygelac his evening's vaunt; he stood upright and laid fast hold upon him. The fingers of the giant one snapped. He was getting free and the hero stepped forward. The mighty one meant, if so he might, to get at large,

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and flee away to his fen-lairs. He knew his fingers' strength was in the foeman's close grip. That was an ill journey the doer of mischief had taken to Heorot.

The lordly hall was clamorous with the din. Panic fell on all the Danes that dwelt in the city, on every bold warrior and earl. Maddened were the raging strugglers; the building reëchoed. It was great wonder, then, that the wine-hall held firm against them in their battle-rage, that it did not fall, the fair dwelling of man's making, to the earth, save that shrewd care had bound it so fast with iron bands within and without. Then, as I have heard tell, when they strove in their fury, mead-benches many, decked with gold, fell over from the raised floor. The wise ones among the Scyldings had never thought that any man of men by his might should ever shatter that fabric, passing good and made brave with bones of beasts, or spoil it through cunning, save the fire's embrace might swallow it up in smoke.

An uproar strange enough rose on high. Quaking terror lay upon the North-Danes, upon those who heard the outcry, hearkened God's foe yelling out his stave of terror, his song of defeat, the thrall of hell bewailing his hurt. Much too tightly that one held him, who had of men the strongest might in this life's day.

XII. *Of Beowulf's victory and Grendel's flight.*

The protector of earls would not in any wise let him that came with murder in his heart go from him alive; he counted not his life's day of price to any. Earls of his a plenty made play with their tried swords, handed down from their fathers, to save their lord's life, if in any wise they might; they knew not, those bold-hearted warsmen, when they went into the fight and thought to hew Grendel on every side and

find out his soul, that not any pick of blades on earth, none of battle-bills, could touch that fell spoiler, for he had laid his spell on weapons of victory, on every keen edge. Woeful was his last end to be in this life's day, and his outlawed ghost must fare far into the fiend's grip. Then found he, that before in mirth of mood had wrought mankind many evils (he was under God's ban), that his body would avail him not, seeing that the brave kinsman of Hygelac had him by the hand; hateful to each was the other alive. The grisly monster suffered hurt of body. In his shoulder a fearful wound began to show; the sinews sprang apart, the bone-frame cracked asunder. Fame of the battle was given to Beowulf. Grendel must flee away beneath the fen-fells, sick unto death, go seek out his dwelling, reft of his comfort. He knew then the more surely that his life's end was come, his measure of days. The will of all the Danes was fulfilled by that deadly strife. He then, who had come from afar, the wise one and bold of heart, had cleansed Heorot, and saved it from peril. The prince of the Geatmen had made whole his boast to the East-Danes in that he had taken away all their trouble, the burden of spiteful hate they till then had suffered, and in stress of need must suffer, a sorrow by no means small. A manifest token of this it was, when the valorous one laid down the hand, the arm and shoulder — the whole claw of Grendel was there together — beneath the broad roof.

XIII. *How the Danes rejoiced and followed Grendel's track to his lair; how they raced their horses on the way back and hearkened to songs of Beowulf's deed, and of Sigemund and Heremod.*

In the morning, then, as I have heard tell, was

there many a warrior about the mead-hall; from far and near the leaders of the people fared through the wide ways to see the marvel, the tracks of the foe. Grendel's life-ending seemed no matter for sorrow to any of those that scanned the way he trod after his undoing, how in weariness of heart, worsted in the fight, hunted forth and nigh unto death, he bare himself away then in flight to the mere of the nickers. Its flood there was seething with gore, its dread coil of waters all mingled with hot blood; the deep welled with the blood of slaughter, after that, bereft of joys, he laid down his life, his heathen soul, doomed to death, in his fen-shelter, where hell took him.

Back then from the mere on their joyful way went riding on their steeds the old tried comrades, men of valor, and many a youth likewise, the warriors on their dapple-grays. There was Beowulf's glory remembered. Oft said many a one that south or north, between the seas, over the wide earth, beneath the reach of the sky, no other of shield-bearers was better, or more worthy of a kingdom. No whit though truly did they cast blame on their lord and friend, the kindly Hrothgar, for he was a good king. Whiles, the bold in battle let their yellow steeds leap or race together, where the going seemed good or was known to be best; whiles, a thane of the king, a man laden with proud vaunts, who kept in mind old stories without end, found new words for them, soothly bound together — and afterward began to tell Beowulf's feat with cunning skill and in happy wise to frame well-ordered speech, add word answering to word, and told aught man might choose of what he had heard tell of Sigemund's deeds of prowess, many things not widely known, the strife of the son of Wæls, journeys to far lands, feuds and

deeds of violence, that the children of men had not wist of readily, save Fitela were with him when he was minded to tell somewhat of such like, the uncle to his nephew — close comrades ever in every strife.

"They had slain with their swords full many of the race of the Eotens. No small glory was added to Sigemund after his death's day, seeing that, stout in battle, he slew the dragon, keeper of the treasure-hoard. Alone under the hoar stone, the son of the atheling dared the bold deed, nor was Fitela with him. None the less was it given him that his sword, lordly blade that it was, should go through the marvellous worm so it stood fast in the wall — the dragon died a bloody death. So sped the dread hero by his prowess, that he might take his joy, as he willed, of the treasure-hoard; his sea-boat he loaded, the son of Wæls, bare into the ship's bosom the bright trappings; heat made end of the dragon. The shield of warriors was of free-booters most widely famed among the races of men for deeds of valor; he throve because of it in days of old.

"After Heremod's battle-craft failed, his strength and his might, he was betrayed, among the Eotens, forth into the power of his foes, done away with in haste. The waves of sorrow had troubled him long; he became to his people to all the athelings, a perilous burden. So also often, in earlier times, many a prudent man had mourned the course the bold-minded one was taking, in whom he had trusted for help against evils, whom he had looked to see thrive as the son of his lord, fall heir to his father's honors, watch over the folk, the treasure, the home-city, the realm of heroes, the ancestral lands of the Scyldings. Beowulf, in that he did, was of kindlier will toward his friends and toward all; evil came on Heremod."

Now and again, striving against one another, they measured the yellow roads with their coursers. Thus was the morning light sped on and hastened by. Many a brave-minded warrior went to the high hall to see the strange wonder. The king himself, also, warden of the treasure-hoard, known for his virtues, walked in stately wise from the queen's bower with a great

company, and the queen, with her train of women, paced up the path beside him to the mead-hall.

XIV. *Of Hrothgar's praise of Beowulf and Beowulf's reply.*

Hrothgar spake; he went to the hall, stood beside the pillar, looked on the steep-pitched roof, brave with gold, and Grendel's hand: "For this sight thanks be paid forthwith to the Almighty! Much of evil and harm have I suffered from Grendel. Ever may God, the Lord of Glory, work wonder on wonder. It was not long ago that I thought not forever to look for help in aught of my troubles whilst the fairest of houses stood bloodstained and gory — a woe wide-reaching for each of my wise ones who hoped not to the end of time to guard the people's fastness from foes, from ghosts, and from demons. Now hath a man through the Lord's might done a deed we might none of us compass aforetime for all our wisdom. Behold, truly, this may say even such a one of women, if she yet liveth, that hath brought forth this son among the races of men, that the everlasting God hath been gracious to her in her child-bearing. Now will I love thee, Beowulf, best of men, as a son in my heart; hold thou close henceforth this new kinship. No lack shall be thine of things worth having in the world, that I have at my bidding. Full oft for less service have I given award of treasured riches to a warrior not so worthy, one weaker in battle. Thou hast wrought for thyself by thy deeds that thy fame shall live for ever and ever. May the Almighty requite thee with good, as till now He hath done!"

Beowulf spake, the son of Ecgtheow: "Full gladly in thy service have we carried through this mighty task, this fight; boldly we dared the strength of the

unknown. I wish mightily thou couldst have seen him, the foe himself in his trappings, bowed to his fall. I thought to bind him full speedily with hard bonds on his death-bed, so that he through the grip of my hands should lie toiling for his life, save his body should slip away. I could not, since the Lord willed it not, cut him off from his going; I held him not fast enough, the deadly foe, — much too strong was the fiend in his footing. Yet for his life's fending he left behind him his claw to mark his path, his arm, and his shoulder; none the less might he buy there, in his need, no comfort, nor shall he, because of it, live the longer, the loathly spoiler, burdened with sins, for his hurt hath straitly clutched him in its close grip with bonds of bale. There the outcast, in the guilt of his sins, shall abide the great judgment, as the Lord in His splendor is minded to mete it unto him."

Then in his vaunting speech was the warrior, the son of Ecglaf, more quiet concerning deeds of war, after that the athelings had seen, each of them there before him above the high roof, through the earl's might, the hand and fingers of the fiend. Most like to steel was each strong nail, the hand-spurs of the heathen one, the monstrous barbs of the foeman. Each one said that no blade of doughty men, though ever so good, would have so laid hold of him as to shear away the battle-fist, all bloody, of the monster.

XV. *How Beowulf was feasted and gifts given him.*

Then forthwith was Heorot bidden to be decked inwardly by the hand; many of them there were, of men and of women, that made ready the wine-hall, the guest-house. Gleaming with gold shone the hangings on the wall, wondrous things many to see for any one

that looketh at such things. The bright house was much broken, all fastened though it was within with iron bands. The hinges were wrenched away; the roof alone was left all whole, when the monster, guilty of deeds of outrage, hopeless of life, had turned to flee. Not easy is it to flee away, let him do it that will, for each that hath a soul of the children of men dwelling on earth must needs strive toward the place made ready for him, forced on him by fate, where his body shall sleep, fast in its bed of rest, after life's feasting.

Then was it the time and hour that the son of Healfdene should go to the hall; the king himself desired to eat of the feast. Never heard I of a people with a greater host bear themselves more becomingly about their treasure-giver. In the pride of their renown they bowed them to the benches, rejoiced in the plenty. In fair wise their kinsmen, the valorous-hearted Hrothgar and Hrothulf, drank in the high hall many a mead-cup. Heorot was filled within with friends; in no wise at this time had the Folk-Scyldings wrought wickedness.

Then, in reward for his victory, the son of Healfdene gave to Beowulf a golden standard, a broidered war-banner, a helmet and burnie; a mighty treasure-sword full many saw borne before the warrior. He needed not feel shame before the bowsmen for the gifts given him for his keeping; never heard I of many men that gave to others on the mead-bench four treasures in friendlier wise. About the helmet's crown, a raised ridge without, wound with small rods, maintained a guard for the head, that the file-furnished blades, hard of temper, might not harm it in their boldness, when the warrior with shield must go forth against his foes. Then the safeguard of earls bade eight

steeds, their bridles heavy with gold, be led indoors on the floor of the hall; on one of them rested a saddle, fashioned with cunning art and well-dight with treasure, that had been the battle-seat of the high king when the son of Healfdene had will to wage the sword-play; never at the front failed the far-famed one's battle-might, when the slain were falling. And then the prince of the Ingwines gave Beowulf the right over both of these, the steeds and the weapons, bade him have good joy of them. In such wise, manfully, the mighty prince, treasure-warden of heroes, paid for shocks of battle with steeds and treasure, such as none might ever belie that hath will to speak the truth according to the right.

XVI. *Of the king's gifts to Beowulf's men, of the rejoicing in Heorot, and of the gleeman's song of Finn.*

Further, then, the lord of earls gave treasure on the mead-bench, swords handed down from old, to each of the earls that had drawn over the sea-way with Beowulf, and bade that payment be made with gold for the one that Grendel first wickedly slew, as he would have slain more of them had not the wise God and the hero's daring forestalled that fate for them. The Lord ruled all the children of men, as He now still doth; therefore is wise understanding and forethought of mind best everywhere. He who for long in these days of strife maketh use of the world must undergo much of good and evil.

Song and sound of playing were joined together there before the battle-leader of the Half-Danes. The play-wood was touched, the lay oft rehearsed, what time Hrothgar's gleeman must duly call forth the hall-joy along the mead-bench:

"Through the sons of Finn, when the onslaught came on them, must Hnaef the Scylding, famed warrior of the Half-Danes, in the Frisian slaughter meet with his fall. Hildeburh had truly no need to praise the good faith of the eotens; not by her fault was she bereaved of her dear sons and brothers in the shield-play; one after another they fell, wounded by the spear; a sorrowful woman was she!

"It was not for naught, surely, the daughter of Hoc bemoaned the decree of fate after morning came, when she might see beneath the sky the murderous overthrow of her kinsmen, where till then earth's greatest joy was hers.

"War took off all Finn's thanes, save only a few, so that he might no whit wage war on the battle-field with Hengest, nor save by warfare the poor leavings of his band from the thane of the prince. But they offered the Danes a pact, that they would fit for themselves in every wise another hearth-floor, a hall, and a high seat, so might the Danes have equal power with themselves, the children of the eotens, and each day, at the giving of gifts, the son of Folcwalda would treat the Danes worshipfully, show regard for Hengest's fellowship, by giving of rings, and even so much of precious treasure of plates of gold, as that wherewith he would cheer the Frisian kindred in the beer-hall.

"Then they plighted on either side a fast troth of peace. Finn vowed to Hengest by oaths, solemnly and in true earnest, he would hold in honor the poor few that were left of Hengest's followers under the ruling of his wise men; that no man there should break the pact by word or deed, or ever through crafty intent call it to mind, though they, bereft of their prince, should, since it was thus forced on them, follow him that slew their ring-giver; if, moreover, any of the Frisians with reckless speech should call that mortal hate to mind, then the sword's edge should avenge it.

"The oath was made, and the treasured gold fetched from the hoard. The best warsman of the Battle-Scyldings was ready at the fire; on the pile was plain to see the blood-stained sark, the swine all of gold, the boar-helmet of tough iron, and many an atheling, dead of his wounds, that fell in the slaughter.

"Then Hildeburh bade her own son be given to the flames on Hnaef's pyre, his body to the burning, and be put on the fire. The poor woman wept on his shoulder, sorrowed for him in song. The warrior went up on the pile. The greatest of death-fires

whirled up to the clouds, roared before the barrow; the heads melted, the slashes broke apart, when the blood sprang out from the body's deadly wounds. The flame, greediest of spirits, swallowed up all those whom death had taken off of both peoples; from them both had their strength been taken away."

XVII. *Of the end of the song of Finn and of Wealhtheow's bearing the cup to Hrothgar.*

"Then the warfarers, despoiled of their friends, went to seek out living-places, to see Friesland, its homesteads and its high city. Hengest then still, through that death-stained winter, dwelt with Finn in every wise without strife. He kept thought of his home, though he might not drive his ringed prow over the sea. The deep was swollen with storm, dark with the wind. Winter locked the waves in its icy shackles, till another year came to the homes of men, as it now still doth, the seasons glory-bright that ever hold to the times set them.

"Then was winter away, and fair the earth's bosom. The guest in his exile was meaning to go from that land; but he thought rather of vengeance than of the sea-voyage, if so be he might bring about a meeting in anger, that he might take his account therein of the sons of the Eotens. Thus it was he escaped not the law of this world when Hun plunged Lafing into his breast, his battle-gleamer, best of swords, whose edges were well-known to the eotens.

"Likewise thereafter a fierce death by the sword found out Finn, the bold of heart, in his own home, after that Guthlaf and Oslaf, come home over the sea, had told in sorrow of the grim strife, and blamed on him the many sorrows that had befallen them. He might not keep his wavering spirit in his breast. The hall was covered then with the bodies of the foe, and Finn likewise was slain, the king among his fellowship, and his queen taken. The bowsmen of the Scyldings bare to the ships all the household goods of the country's king, all they might find in Finn's house of precious ornaments and cunningly set gems. Over the sea-way they bare the princely lady to the Danes, led her to her people."

The lay was sung, the gleeman's song. Again rose the revel, the clamor along the benches resounded clear, the bearers gave of the wine from vessels of

wondrous workmanship. Then came forth Wealhtheow under her golden diadem, going where the goodly twain, uncle and nephew, were seated; as yet they were at peace together, each loyal to the other. There likewise sat Hunferth, the spokesman, at the feet of the lord of the Scyldings; all of them had faith in his mettle, that he had a high spirit, though he had not been steadfast to his kinsfolk in the sword-play.

Then spake the lady of the Scyldings: "Take this cup, my liege-lord, giver of treasure. Be thou of glad heart, generous friend of men, and speak to the Geats with words of kindness. So should one do. Be gracious towards the Geats, mindful of gifts, now that thou hast peace near and far. They have told me that thou desirest to hold this warrior as thy son. Heorot, the bright hall of ring-giving, is cleansed; take thy joy of giving, whilst thou mayest, many rewards, and leave folk and realm to thy kinsmen, when thou must forth to meet thy fate. I know my gracious Hrothulf, that he will keep in honorable charge the youth, if thou, friend of the Scyldings, shouldst leave the world before him. I ween he will repay our children with good, if he keep thought of all we have done in the past at his wish and for his behoof, since he was still but a child."

Then she turned to the bench where her sons were, Hrethric and Hrothmund, and the sons of warriors, the youth there together. There by the two brothers sat the goodly one, Beowulf, the Geat.

XVIII. *Of the queen's gifts to Beowulf and of the feast and their going to rest when evening came.*

A cup was borne to him, and pledges proffered with friendly speech, and twisted gold laid before him in token of gracious regard, with two arm-jewels, a coat

of mail, rings, and the fairest of collars I have heard tell of on earth — of none fairer heard I under the sky among the hoarded treasures of heroes, after that Hama bare off to the bright city the collar of the Brosings, the jewel and coffer, fled the evil wiles of Eormanric, and chose eternal gain. Hygelac the Geat, grandson of Swerting, had this collar on his last foray, when beneath his standard he guarded his treasure, kept ward of his battle-spoil; him Wyrd took away, after that he, for his foolhardiness, had undergone woes and vengeance at the hands of the Frisians. The lord of the realm carried with him at that time this adornment and its precious stones over the cup of the waves. He fell beneath his shield, and the king's body came into the Franks' grasp, and his breast-mail and the collar as well. The fighting-men of less degree despoiled the corse after the battle's end. The people of the Geats filled the abode of the dead.

The hall caught up the clamor of the revel. Wealhtheow made discourse, and spake before the company: "Take thy joy in this collar, dear Beowulf, youth blessed of fortune, and use this mail and these treasures of the people, and thrive well. Give proof of thyself by thy might and be friendly in giving counsel to these youths; I shall keep in mind thy due therefor. Thou hast so wrought that far and near, forever henceforth, men shall pay thee honor, even so far as the sea enfoldeth its windy walls. Be, whilst thou livest, an atheling blest with wealth; I heartily wish thee holdings of treasure. Be thou helpful in doing for my son, guarding his welfare. Here is each earl true to the other, mild of mood, loyal to his liege-lord. The thanes are willing, the people in

every wise ready at bidding. Ye warriors well-drunken, do ye as I bid."

Then went she to her place. There was the choicest of feasts. The men drank of the wine; of Wyrd they recked not, the grim doom fixed from aforetime, as it had come to many an earl. When that even came and Hrothgar went him, the ruler, to his rest, in his house, unnumbered earls kept ward of the hall, as they oft had done before. They bared the bench-floor and it was spread through its length with beds and pillows. Ready and doomed for death, one of the beer-servers bowed him to his rest in the hall. They set at their heads their battle-targes, the framed wood of their bright shields. There, over each atheling, were plain to see on the bench the helmet lifted in battle, the ringed burnie, the mighty shafts in their strength. It was their rule to be ever and again ready for the fray at home or in wartime, either one, even at what time soever need might befall their liege-lord. That was a good people!

XIX. *Of the coming of Grendel's dam.*

They sank then to sleep. One paid sorely for his evening's rest, even as full often had befallen them after Grendel took the gold-hall for his own, did what was not right till the end came, death following upon his sins. It became plain, and known far and wide of men, that an avenger still lived even yet after him, the loathly one, for a long time following upon that bitter warfare. Grendel's mother kept thought of her sorrow, a she-one, a monster-wife, that was fated to dwell midst the water's terrors, in the cold streams, after Cain had slain by the sword his only brother, his kin by one father — outlawed he went away then, with the mark of murder on him, to flee the joys of

men, and dwelt in waste places. Of him were born many demons ordained of fate; Grendel was one of them, an outcast filled with hatred, who found at Heorot a man watching, awaiting battle. There the monster came to grips with him, but he was mindful of the strength of his might, the deep-seated gift God had given him, and trusted him for grace in the Almighty, for comfort and aid; hence he overcame the fiend, felled the demon of hell. Then went he forth, that foe of mankind, abject and reft of joy, to look on the house of death. And, still thereafter, his mother, greedy, and dark of mood, was of mind to go a journey fraught with grief to avenge the death of her son, came therefore to Heorot, where the Ring-Danes slept in the hall.

Then when Grendel's mother made her way in, was there straightway there for the earls a turning backward to what had been before. The terror was less even by so much as is woman's strength, the fierceness of a woman in fight, beside a weapon-bearer's, when the sword bound with gold, wrought with the hammer, the blade blood-stained, sheareth with its tough edge the swine that standeth above the helmet.

Then in the hall from above the benches was the hard-edged sword taken down, many a broad shield lifted in the hand's grip; they whom the terror seized took no thought of helmet or broad burnie. The monster was in haste, would thence away to save her life, for that she was discovered. Quickly had she one of the athelings fast in her clutch, and went off to the fen. He whom she slew at his rest was a strong shield-warrior, a warsman of enduring fame, of all the men in office of comrade the dearest to Hrothgar between the seas. Beowulf was not there, for before

then, after the treasure-giving, another resting-place had been fixed upon for the mighty Geat. There was outcry in Heorot. She had taken in its gore the hand of Grendel that so much had been made of. Sorrow was begun anew, was come again to their homes. The bargain was not good, seeing they must on either hand make purchase with the lives of friends.

Then was the old king, the hoar warrior, stricken in spirit when he knew his chief thane, the one dearest to him, to be lifeless and dead. Beowulf, the warrior crowned with victory, was quickly fetched to the bower. At daybreak, he, together with his earls, the high-born warrior himself with his followers, went where the wise king awaited if so be, after tidings thus grievous, the Almighty might ever will to work a change for him. The hero tried in battle went then with his fellowship over the floor — the timbered hall rang — to give words of greeting to the wise lord of the Ingwines, asked him, as courtesy bade, if his night had been peaceful.

XX. *How Hrothgar told Beowulf of the loss of Æschere and of Grendel's dam.*

Hrothgar, helm of the Scyldings, spake: "Ask not concerning that which gives joy. Sorrow is renewed among the Dane-folk. Dead is Æschere, Yrmenlaf's elder brother, my counsellor and adviser, the comrade who stood shoulder to shoulder with me when we kept guard of our heads in battle, when the footmen met together, and boar-helms clashed. Such an atheling, passing good, as Æschere was, should an earl be. The murderous demon, the wandering one, with her hand hath slain him in Heorot. I know not what path from here the fell one hath taken, glorying in her carrion food, glad of her fill. She hath avenged thine on-

slaught, that thou didst kill Grendel yesternight in pitiless wise by thy close grip, for that he long had minished and slain my people. Guilty of death, he fell in battle, and now hath a second come, a spoiler mighty for mischief; she is minded to avenge her kinsman, and hath carried her vengeance so far that it may seem torment of spirit hard to bear to many a thane that sorroweth in his soul for his treasure-giver. Now the hand lieth helpless that was earnest to thee of aught whatsoever that is worth the having.

"I have heard the dwellers in the land, my people, they that hold sway in their halls, say they have seen such twain as these, mighty prowlers along the borders of the homes of men, making the moors their own. One of these was, so far as they might most carefully judge, in form like a woman: the other misbegotten one trod in man's shape the path of exile, save that he was greater in size than any man. Him in days of old the earth-dwellers named Grendel: they knew not his father, or whether any lurking demons were ever born to him. They take as theirs a country hidden away, the wolf-fells and windy nesses, perilous fen-ways, where the flood of the mountain-stream goeth downward under the earth beneath the mists of the forelands. It is not far hence, measured in miles, where the mere standeth. Rime-covered thickets hang over it; a wood fast-rooted shadoweth the waters. There may a fearful marvel be seen each night, a fire in the flood. None liveth ever so wise of the children of men that knoweth the bottom. Though the rover of the heath, the stag, strong with his antlers, may seek, hunted from afar, that thick wood, he will yield up his spirit first, his life on its brink, ere he will hide away his head within it. The place is not goodly.

Thence riseth a coil of waters dark to the clouds, when the wind stirreth up foul weather till the air groweth thick and the heavens make outcry.

"Now, again, is help in thee alone. That country thou know'st not yet, the fearsome place, where thou mayest find the much-sinning one. Seek it if thou darest. I shall requite thee for the strife with gifts for the keeping, with old-time treasures and twisted gold, as I did before, shouldst thou come thence away."

XXI. *How Hrothgar and Beowulf went to the mere in which the monster dwelt.*

Beowulf spake, the son of Ecgtheow: "Sorrow not, man of wise mind! It is better one should avenge his friend than mourn for him long. Each of us must abide life's end in this world. Let him that may, win fame ere death; that shall be best thereafter for a warrior, when life is no more.

"Arise, warden of the realm, let us go quickly to look upon the track of Grendel's fellow. I promise thee he shall not flee to shelter, not in earth's bosom, or mountain forest, or ocean's bed, go where he will. For this day have patience in thine every woe, as I ween thou wilt."

Then the old man sprang up and gave thanks to God, the mighty Lord, for that the hero had spoken. A horse then, a steed with plaited mane, was bridled for Hrothgar. The wise king went in state; with him fared forth a foot-band of shield-bearers. The tracks were plain to see far along the forest-ways, the path she hath taken across the levels; straight went she over the murky moor, bare away, with his soul gone from him, the best of Hrothgar's kindred that with him governed the homestead.

Then over the steep stone-fells and narrow tracks, in close by-paths, an unknown way, by beetling cliffs and many a nicker's lair, went the son of athelings. With a few wise-minded men, he went before to see the place, till he found suddenly the mountain trees, the joyless wood, leaning over the hoar rock. The water stood beneath, blood-stained and troubled. It was for all the Danes, for the friends of the Scyldings, a sorrow of soul to bear, grief to many a thane and every earl, when they came upon the head of Æschere on the sea-cliff. The flood boiled, as the people gazed upon it, with blood and hot gore.

The horn at times sang its stirring lay of battle. All the band sat them down. They saw in the water many of the dragon kind, strange sea-drakes making trial of the surge, likewise on the jutting rocks the nickers lying, that oft at hour of dawn make foray grief-giving on the sail-road, and dragons and wild beasts beside. In bitter wrath and swollen with fury, these hasted away; they heard the call, the war-horn singing. The prince of the Geats severed the life from one with a bow, as it strove with the sea, so that the stout battle-shaft went home to its life. Slower was it then in swimming the deep, seeing death had gripped it. Then quickly was it hemmed in closely in the waves with boar-spears keen-barbed, assailed with shrewd thrusts, and drawn on the headland, the wondrous wave-lifter. The men gazed on the fearsome unfriendly thing.

Then Beowulf put on him his earl's armor: in no wise had he misgivings for his life. His war-burnie hand-woven, broad and cunningly adorned, that could well shield his body so battle-grip might not harm his breast or the foe's shrewd clasp his life, must needs

make trial of the deeps. But his head the white helmet guarded, that must mingle with the sea-depths, seek the coil of the surges, well-dight as it was with treasure-work, bound with lordly chains, as the weaponsmith wrought it in far-off days, decked it with wonders, set it with swine-shapes, that thereafter brand nor battle blade might bite it. Not least of these great helps was that which Hrothgar's spokesman had loaned him in his need; the hafted sword was named Hrunting. It was one of the chiefest of old-time treasures. Its edge was iron, dyed with poison-twigs, hardened with blood; never in battle did it betray any that clasped it in hand, durst tread the ways of terror, the meeting-place of the foe. That was not the first time it should do a deed of prowess. Surely the son of Ecglaf in the might of his strength kept not thought of what he before spake, drunken with wine, when he lent that weapon to a warrior better with the sword than he. He durst not himself hazard his life beneath the waves, striving to do a warrior's duty: thereby he forfeited the honor, the acclaims of prowess. Not so was it with the other, after he had arrayed himself for the strife.

XXII. *How Beowulf sought out and fought with the monster.*

Beowulf spake, the son of Ecgtheow: "Keep thou now in mind, great son of Healfdene, wise prince, freehanded friend of men, now I am ready for my venture, that of which we already have spoken, that, should I for thy need be shorn of life, thou wouldst ever be to me, gone hence away, in the place of a father. Be thou a guardian to my thanes, my close comrades, if the strife take me. Likewise send the treasures thou gavest me, dear Hrothgar, to Hygelac;

then may the lord of the Geats, the son of Hrethel, know by the gold and see, when he looketh on the treasure, that I found a giver of rings goodly in manly virtues, had joy of him whilst I might. And do thou let Hunferth, warrior famed afar, have his precious war-sword with its tough edge, handed down from old. I shall win fame for myself with Hrunting, or death shall take me."

After these words the prince of the Weder-Geats hasted in his valor, would in no wise await an answer; the coil of the waters laid hold of the warrior. It was a day's while ere he might see the bottom-level. Soon she, that, ravenous for food, grim and greedy, had held for half a hundred winters the stretches of the flood, found that some one of men was there from above searching out the home of beings not man-like. She laid hold then upon him, seized him in her terrible claws. His hale body she hurt not thereby: his mail without shielded him round, so she might not, with her loathly fingers, reach through his war-coat, the linked battle-sark. The sea-wolf, when she came to the bottom, bare him then, the ring-giving prince, to her home, in such wise he might not, brave as he was, wield his weapons, though, because of it, many strange beings pressed him close in the deep, many a sea-beast with its fighting-tushes brake his battle-sark, harried their troubler.

Then the earl was aware he was in one knows not what fearsome hall, where no water might harm him aught, or the quick grip of the flood touch him, because of the roofed hall. He saw the light of fire, a flashing flare brightly shining. The worthy one looked then on the she-wolf of the sea-bottom, the mighty water-wife. The full strength of onset he gave with his

battle-axe, his hand held not back from the stroke, so that on her head the ring-decked blade sang out its greedy war-song. The foe found then that the battle-gleamer would not bite, or harm her life, for its edge betrayed the prince in his need. Erstwhile had it gone through many a close encounter, cloven oft the helm and battle-mail of the doomed; for the first time then did the dear treasure lay down its glory. Still was the kinsman of Hygelac, mindful of proud deeds, of one thought, and in no wise lost courage. In wrath the warrior threw aside the chased sword, strong and steel-edged, set with jewels, that it lay on the earth; he trusted to his strength, to the might of his hand-grip. So must a man do when he thinketh to reach in battle enduring fame; he careth naught for his life.

Then the lord of the War-Geats — he shrank not at all from the strife — seized Grendel's mother by the shoulders. Strong in battle he hurled his life's foe, for that he was swollen with wrath, so she fell to the ground. Quickly she paid him back his dues to his hand in savage clinchings, and laid hold upon him. Spent in spirit, the fighter on foot, strongest of warriors, tripped so he fell. Then she threw herself on the stranger in her hall, and drew her dagger broad and bright-edged — she thought to avenge her son, her only child. His woven breast-mail lay on his shoulder; it shielded his life, withstood the in-thrust of point and blade. Then had the son of Ecgtheow, foremost fighter of the Geats, gone to his death beneath the broad deeps, had not his battle-burnie, the stout battle-mesh, given him help, and Holy God, the Wise Lord, Ruler of the Heavens, held sway over victory in battle, awarded it aright. Readily thereafter he found his feet.

XXIII. *How Beowulf slew the monster, and returned with Grendel's head.*

He saw then among the war-gear a blade oft victorious, an old sword of the eotens, doughty of edge, one prized by warriors; it was the choicest of weapons, save that it was greater than any other man might bear out to the battle-play, good and brave to see, the work of giants. The warrior of the Scyldings seized it by its chain-bound hilt. Raging and battle-fierce, he drew the ring-marked blade, and despairing of life smote so wrathfully that the hard edge gripped her by the neck, brake the bone-rings; the sword went clean through her fated body, and she fell to the ground.

The sword was bloody; the hero gloried in his deed. The fire flamed forth; light stood within there, even as when the candle of the sky shineth brightly from heaven. He looked about the dwelling, turned him then to the wall. The thane of Hygelac, wrathful and steadfast of thought, raised the hard weapon by the hilt. The edge was not useless to the warrior, for he was minded to requite Grendel speedily for the many onslaughts he had made on the West-Danes far oftener than a single time, when he slew Hygelac's hearth-comrades in their sleep, ate fifteen men as they slept of the Dane-folk, and bare off as many more, a loathly spoil. Beowulf, relentless warrior, so far paid Grendel his dues for that, that he now saw him lying on his bed, battle-weary and lifeless, in such wise as the strife in Heorot had scathed him. The corse sprang far when it underwent a blow after death, a hard sword-stroke, and Beowulf cut off the head.

Soon the men of wise thought, who with Hrothgar

looked on the water, saw that the swirl of the wave was all mingled with blood, that the flood was stained with it. The white-haired old men spake together of the goodly atheling, how they looked not he should come again, glorying in victory, to seek their mighty prince, for, because of the blood, it seemed to many that the sea-wolf had slain him. Then came the ninth hour of the day. The brave Scyldings left the cliff; the gold-giving friend of men went him homeward. The strangers sat there, sick at heart, and stared on the mere. They wished and yet trusted not, to see their dear lord's self.

Then the war-brand, the sword, began, because of the monster's blood, to fall away in battle-icicles; a marvel was it how it all melted likest to ice, when the Father, that holdeth sway over times and seasons, freeth the bonds of the frost, unwindeth the flood's fetters. He is the true Lord.

The chief of the Weder-Geats took no more of the treasure-holdings in the dwelling, though he saw many there, but only the head, and with it, the sword's hilt, brave with gold; the sword had already melted, its chased blade burned wholly, so hot was the blood, so poisonous the demon of strange kind, that met her death there in the hall.

Soon was he swimming, that had borne erstwhile the battle-shock of the foe. He dove up through the water. The moil of the waves was all cleansed, the wide domains where the strange demon had yielded up her life's day and this world that passeth.

The safeguard of seafarers, the strong of heart, came swimming then to land; he joyed in his sea-spoil, the mighty burden he had with him. Then went they to him, his chosen band of thanes; God

they thanked, had joy of their lord, for that it was given them to see him safe. Speedily then the helmet and burnie of the unfaltering one were loosed. The pool, the water beneath the clouds, stained with the blood of slaughter, grew still.

Forth thence they fared by the foot-paths, joyful of heart. The men measured the earth-way, the well-known road, bold as kings. The head they bare from the sea-cliff with toil that was heavy for any of them, great of courage though they were; four it took to bear Grendel's head with labor on the shaft of death to the gold-hall, till to the hall came faring forthwith the fourteen Geats, picked men brave in battle. Their liege-lord together with them trod boldly in the midst of them the meadow-stretches.

Then the foremost of the thanes, the man brave of deed, exalted in glory, the warrior bold in strife, came in to greet Hrothgar. Grendel's head, grisly to behold, was borne into the hall, where the men were drinking before the earls and the lady as well. The men looked on that sight strange to see.

XXIV, XXV. *How Beowulf told of the fight, and was praised and counselled by Hrothgar; of the feasting, and how on the morrow the Geats prepared to leave the land of the Danes.*

Beowulf spake, the son of Ecgtheow: "Lo, with joy we have brought thee, son of Healfdene, lord of the Scyldings, in token of glory, the sea-spoil thou here beholdest. Not easily came I forth with my life, hazarded with sore hardship the toils of war beneath the waters. Almost had the strife been ended, save that God shielded me. Naught might I achieve with Hrunting in the strife, good as that weapon is, but the Ruler of Men vouchsafed it me to see hanging on the wall

an old sword, noble and mighty — most oft is He guide to the friendless — so that I drew the weapon. Then I slew in the struggle the guardians of the hall, for the chance was given me. The battle-blade then, the chased sword, was burned to naught, when the blood sprang forth, hottest of battle-gore; I bare away thence the hilt from my foes, avenged in fitting wise their evil deeds and the Danes' death-fall. I promise thee, therefore, thou mayest in Heorot sleep free from care with thy fellowship of warriors, and every thane of thy people likewise, young and old — that thou needest not, lord of the Scyldings, have dread of death-peril for them on this hand, for thine earls, as thou didst ere this." Then the golden hilt, the work of giants long ago, was given into the hand of the old prince, the white-haired battle-leader. After the overthrow of the devilish ones, it fell, the work of marvellous smiths, into the keeping of the Danes' lord; when the grim-hearted one, God's foe, with murder upon him, gave up the world, and his mother also, it fell in this wise into the keeping of the best of world-kings, between the seas, of those that in Scedenig parted gifts of gold.

Hrothgar spake, looked on the hilt, the old heirloom, on which was written the beginning of that far-off strife, when the flood, the streaming ocean, slew the giant kind — they had borne themselves lawlessly. The people were estranged from the Eternal Lord; the Wielder, therefore, gave them their requital through the whelming of the waters. So was it duly lined in rimed staves on the guard of gleaming gold, set down and told for them for whom that sword was wrought, choicest of blades, with twisted hilt and decked with dragon-shapes.

Then the wise one spake, the son of Healfdene; all were silent: "That, lo, may he say that worketh truth and right among the people (the old warden of the realm keepeth all in mind from of old) that this earl was born of a nobler race. Thy fame is exalted, my friend Beowulf, among every people throughout the wide ways. Wholly with quietness dost thou maintain it, thy might with wisdom of heart. I shall fulfil my troth to thee, that we spake of, ere now, together. Thou shalt be in every wise a comfort, long-established, to thy people, a help to the warriors. Heremod was not so to the children of Ecgwela, the Honor-Scyldings. He grew not up to do as they would have him, but to cause death-fall and deadly undoing for the Dane-folk. In the swelling anger of his heart he slew his table-companions, they that stood at his shoulder, till he went alone, the mighty prince, from the joys of men. Though the mighty God raised him up and set him forth in the joys of dominion and gifts of strength above other men, none the less there grew in his mind and soul a blood-greed. He gave out rings to the Danes not at all as befitted his high estate, lived joyless, and so suffered stress for his vengeful doings, a fate long-enduring at the hands of his people. Do thou learn by this. Lay hold upon manly worth. As one wise in years, I have framed thee this discourse.

"A marvel it is how mighty God in the greatness of His soul bestoweth wise judgment on mankind, land-holdings and earlship; He hath rule over all. Whiles letteth He the heart's thought of a man of high race turn to having and holding, giveth him the joys of this world in his country, a fastness-city of men to keep, so contriveth for him that he ruleth parts of the

earth, a wide realm, such that he may not know the bounds thereof. He dwelleth in fatness; sickness nor age turn him aside no whit; preying sorrow darkeneth not his soul, nor doth strife show itself anywhere, nor warring hate, but all the world wendeth to his will. He knoweth not the worse, till that within him a deal of overweening pride groweth and waxeth, while the warder sleepeth, shepherd of the soul. Too fast is that sleep, bound round with troubles; very nigh is the slayer that in grievous wise shooteth with his bow. Then is he smitten in the breast, with his helmet upon him, by a bitter shaft.

"He cannot guard him from the devious strange biddings of the Accursed Fiend. That seemeth him too little which he hath long held. Perverse of mind, he is greedy, giveth not at all out of pride the rings of plate-gold, and he forgetteth and taketh no heed of the fate to come, because of the deal of blessings God, the King of Glory, hath already given him. Therefore, at the end, it happeneth that the fleeting body sinketh and falleth, marked for death. Another taketh over the earl's former holdings, who dealeth out treasure without repining, and shall take no thought for fear.

"Guard thee from death-dealing malice, dear Beowulf, best of men, and choose the better, the eternal gain. Give not thyself to over-pride, O warrior renowned. Now is the flower of thy strength for one while; soon shall it be hereafter that sickness or the sword's edge, foe's clutch or flood's whelm, the sword's grip or the spear's flight, or grievous old age, shall part thee from thy strength, or the brightness of thine eyes shall fail and grow dark; straightway shall it be, princely one, that death shall overcome thee.

"Half a hundred years beneath the clouds I so ruled the Ring-Danes and warded them in war with spear and sword from many a people through this mid-earth, that I counted myself without a foe 'neath the stretch of the heaven. Behold! a change came to my land, grief after joy, when Grendel, the old-time foe, became my invader; ceaselessly from that troubling I suffered exceeding sorrow of spirit. Thanks be to God, the Eternal Lord, that I have bided in life so long that I may look with mine eyes on this head, gory from the sword.

"Go now to thy mead-bench, honored warrior; taste of the joy of the feast; treasures full many shall be between us twain, when morn shall come."

The Geat was glad at heart and went therewith to find his place, as the wise one had bidden. Then anew, in fair wise, was the feast spread for them, mighty in valor, sitting in the hall. The helm of night darkened down dusky over the bandsmen. The press of warriors all arose; the white-haired prince, the old Scylding, desired to seek his bed. The Geat, the valiant shield-warrior, listed well, past the telling, to rest him. Soon the hall-thane, who took care with courteous observance for the hero's every need, such as in that day seafarers should have, led him forth, come from afar, worn with his venture. Then the great-hearted one took his rest.

The hall lifted itself broad and brave with gold. The guest slept within till the black raven, blithe of heart, heralded the joy of heaven. Then the bright sun came gliding over the plain. The warsmen hasted, the athelings were eager to fare again to their people. He who had come to them, the large of heart, would take ship far thence. The brave one bade the son of

Ecglaf bear off Hrunting, bade him take his sword, his beloved blade, spake him thanks for its lending, said he accounted it a good war-friend, of might in battle, belied not in words the sword's edge. That was a man great of soul! And when the warriors were in forwardness for the journey, with their gear made ready, the atheling dear to the Danes, the hero brave in the fight, went to the high-seat, where the other was, and greeted Hrothgar.

XXVI. *How Beowulf took leave of Hrothgar, and was given rich gifts, and departed with his men.*

Beowulf spake, the son of Ecgtheow: "We, seafaring ones, come from afar, wish now to say that we mean now to make our way to Hygelac. We have been well entreated here in all man could wish; thou hast dealt well by us. If then on earth, O Lord of Men, I may earn more of thy heart's love by deeds of war than I yet have done, I shall straightway be ready. Should I learn over the stretches of the flood that thy neighbors burden thee with dread, as they that hate thee at times have done, I shall bring a thousand thanes, warriors, to thine help. I know of Hygelac, Lord of the Geat-folk, the people's herd, that though he be young he will uphold me in word and deed that I may do thee full honor and bear to thine aid the spear's shaft, the stay of his strength, when need of men shall be thine. If, furthermore, Hrethric, son of the king, take service at the court of the Geats, he shall find many friends there; far-off lands are better to seek by him that may trust in himself."

Hrothgar spake to him in answer: "Now hath the wise Lord sent these sayings into thy soul. Never heard I man so young in years counsel more wisely.

Thou art strong in might and safe in thought, and wise in thy sayings. I account it likely that if it hap the spear, the fierce battle-sword, sickness, or the steel, taketh away the son of Hrethel, thy prince, the people's herd, and thou hast thy life, that the Sea-Geats will have no man better to choose for king, for treasure-warden of the warriors, if thou art willing to rule the realm of thy kinsfolk. Thy brave spirit liketh me, passing well, ever the more, dear Beowulf. Thou hast so wrought that peace shall be between the Geat-folk and the Spear-Danes, and strife be at rest, the guileful onslaughts they have erstwhile undergone. Whilst I rule this wide realm, treasure shall be in common; greeting shall many a one send another by gifts across the gannet's bath; the ringed ship shall bring over the sea offerings and tokens of love. I know the peoples are fast wrought together both toward foe and toward friend, void of reproach in every wise as the way was of old."

Then, thereto, the son of Healfdene, shield of earls, gave him in the hall twelve treasures, bade him make his way with these gifts safe and sound to his dear people, and come again speedily. The king, then, goodly of birth, Lord of the Scyldings, kissed the best of thanes and clasped him about the neck. The tears of the white-haired king fell; old and wise, two things he might look for, but of these the second more eagerly, that they might yet again see one another, mighty in counsel. The man was so dear to him, that he might not bear the tumult of his heart, for in his breast, fast in the bonds of thought, deep-hidden yearning for the dear warrior burned throughout his blood.

Beowulf, gold-proud warrior, trod thence over the grassy earth, rejoicing in his treasure. The sea-goer

awaited her master, as she rode at anchor. Oft then, as they went, was the gift of Hrothgar spoken of with praise. That was a king in all things blameless, till old age, that hath scathed many a man, took from him the joys of might.

XXVII. *How Beowulf sailed back to his own country, and bare his treasure to the palace of his lord, Hygelac; of Hygelac and of his gracious queen, Hygd, and how different, in former days, Thrytho was from her.*

Then came the press of liegemen, passing brave, to the flood; they bare their ringed mail, their linked battle-sarks. The land-warden marked the earls' return, as he did before; he greeted not the strangers with fierce words from the cliff's crest, but rode toward them and said that the Weder-folk, the spoilers in their gleaming mail, were welcome as they fared to their ship. The seaworthy craft, the ring-prowed craft on the sand, was laden then with battle-mail, with the horses and treasure. The mast rose high above the holdings from Hrothgar's hoard. He gave the ship's keeper a sword mounted with gold such that thereafter on the mead-benches he was held the more worthy because of that treasure, that sword handed down from of old.

The hero went him into his ship to cleave the deep water, and left the land of the Danes. Then to the mast was a sea-cloth, a sail, made fast by its rope. The sea-wood creaked. The wind over the waves did not turn the ship from her course. The sea-going craft fared on, floated forth foamy-necked over the waves, the framed ship over the sea-currents, till they might see the cliffs of Geatland, the well-known forelands. The keel, urged by the wind, ran up and stood

fast on the land. Straightway the harbor-guard was at the beach ready, who, already, for a long time, from the shore had gazed out afar, eager to see the dear ones. He bound the broad-bosomed ship to the sand with anchored cables, that the might of the waves might not carry away the goodly timber.

Then Beowulf bade bear up the wealth of princes, the trappings and the plates of gold. It was not far thence for them to go to find Hygelac, the son of Hrethel, where he dwelleth in his homestead, he with his comrades near the sea-wall. The house was passing good, its king in the high hall truly princely, and Hygd, daughter of Hæreth, very young in years, wise, and well-thriven, though she had lived years but few within the city gates. Not close-minded was she, none the less, or too chary in giving of gifts, of treasure-holdings, to the Geat-folk.

Thrytho, dread queen of the people, brought with her fierceness of soul and dire evil-doing. None so brave of the dear comrades, save her lord, durst undertake to look upon her with his eyes by day, save he might count on bonds of death made ready for him, twisted by the hand ; quickly forthwith after his seizing was the sword resolved on, that the deadly blade might shew it forth, make clear his murderous end. That is not a queenly practice for a woman to use, matchless though she be, that a weaver of peace should take away the life of a dear warrior on charge of misdoing. Hemming's kinsman speedily put an end to this. Men, as they drank the ale, told further, that she wrought less of destruction among the people and vengeful onslaughts, so soon as she was given, decked with gold, to the young warrior of proud birth, when she, by her father's behest, sought, journeying over the fallow flood, the hall of Offa, where, henceforward through life, she took exceeding joy in the life fate gave her on the throne, renowned for her goodness, cherished a great love for the prince of men, best, as I have heard tell, between the seas, of all mankind, the race widespread. Therefore Offa, warrior brave with the spear, was held in honor far and wide

for his gifts and his deeds in battle. With wisdom he ruled his realm ; and of him was Eomo, kinsman of Hemming, grandson of Garmund, mighty in battle, born to be of help to warriors.

XXVIII–XXX. *How Beowulf told Hygelac of his adventure.*

Then went the strong one over the sands, himself with his fellowship, treading the sea-beach, the wide shores. The sun, the candle of the world, shone forth hastening from the south. They pushed on their way, went forward stoutly, to where they heard that the shield of earls, the slayer of Ongentheow, the good king, was parting rings in the city. Beowulf's return was made known speedily to Hygelac, that the safe-guard of warriors, his shield-comrade, had come there, still living, to the palace, hale of body from the battle-play to the court. Quickly, as the king bade, was the hall set in readiness within for the way-faring guests.

Then he that had come forth from the strife sat beside the prince himself, kinsman beside kinsman, after that his liege lord had greeted the true man in courteous wise with heartfelt words. The daughter of Hæreth went through the hall for the mead-serving; she loved the people, bare the wine-cup to the hands of the Geats. Hygelac began to question his comrades in fair wise in the high hall; eagerness fretted him to know what the adventures of the Sea-Geats had been: "How befell it thee in thy faring, dear Beowulf, when thou hadst sudden thought to seek battle afar, strife in Heorot, over the salt sea? But didst thou better in any measure the woe far-rumored of the famed prince Hrothgar? I brooded because of it in grief of heart with surging sorrow, nor might I believe in this venture of my dear follower. Long

time I prayed thee not to address the deadly foe, but let the Spear-Danes themselves come to war with Grendel. Thanks I utter to God, that I may see thee safe."

Beowulf spake, the son of Ecgtheow: "Known of many men, Lord Hygelac, is the far-famed meeting, what passage of warfare there was between Grendel and me, in the place where he wrought the Victor-Scyldings sorrow far too much. I avenged it all so that none of Grendel's kin that longest shall live of his loathly race, begirt by the fenland, need boast of that twilight-outcry.

"I first there betook me to greet Hrothgar in the ring-hall. Soon, when he knew my purpose, the mighty son of Healfdene awarded me a seat with his own son. Joyous was the company; never saw I my life long 'neath the hollow of heaven greater joy among those sitting at mead in hall. Whiles, the great queen, peace-bringer between peoples, went through all the hall, heartened the youths, and often bestowed a circlet on a warrior, ere she went to her seat. Whiles, the daughter of Hrothgar bare the ale-beaker before the press of warriors to the earls in turn; Freawaru I heard them name her that sat in the hall, when she gave the embossed treasure-cup to the warriors. She hath been plighted, young and decked with gold, to the gracious son of Froda. It hath seemed to the Scyldings' friend, the keeper of the realm, and he counteth the counsel good, that he through this maid may set at rest a deal of death-feuds and strifes. Oft and again have they given troth-pledges after the fall of that people; for a short space only will the death-spear be lowered, though the bride be goodly.

"Therefore it may ill please the prince of the Heathobards and every thane of the people, when he goeth with his bride into

the hall, that his warrior-hosts should do guest's service for a princeling of the Dane-folk; on him gleam forth bequests of their ancient ones, hard and ring-decked, the Heathobards' own, so long as they might wield their weapons, till that they led away to an evil end their dear comrades and their own lives in the sword-play. Then, as he seeth the treasure, there speaketh out at the beer-drinking an old spearsman that keepeth it in mind all of it, how their men were slain by the spear — his heart is fierce within him. In grief of heart he beginneth to try the temper of the young warriors, through the thought of their breasts, and to waken war-havoc, so speaketh this word: 'Canst thou, my friend, recall the sword, the blade beloved, thy father beneath his battle-mask bare to the fight on his last foray when the Danes slew him, where, after the warriors' fall, when hope of requital failed us, the bold Scyldings held the field of slaughter? Now, from among those murderers, some youth or other goeth his way into the hall, making a show of his trappings, vaunteth of that murder, and weareth the treasures thou shouldest rightly have rule of.'

"Thus every moment he spurreth and remindeth with wounding words, till time cometh that the bride's thane, paying debt of life for his father's deeds, sleepeth in his blood through the sword's bite. The other fleeth him thence with his life; he knoweth the land full well. On both sides then the oath-taking of the earls is broken, and thereafter a deadly hatred welleth up in Ingeld, and his love for his wife groweth cooler through the surgings of his sorrow. I deem not therefore the good-will of the Heathobards towards the Danes, or their part in the peace, free from peril of faithlessness, or their friendship a lasting one.

"I must go on, O ring-giver, to speak once more of Grendel, that thou mayest know in full what outcome there was thereafter of the strife, hand to hand, of warriors. When the jewel of heaven had glided away o'er the plains, the stranger-one, the grisly night-foe, came in his wrath to seek us out where we watched, well and strong, o'er the hall. There was a deadly strife and life-ending there for the fated Hondscio; he fell first, the girded warrior; him, famed thane of our

kindred, Grendel slew with his teeth, swallowed down wholly the corse of the man we loved. Never the sooner for that was the bloody-fanged slayer, with havoc in heart, minded to go forth again empty-handed from the treasure-hall, but, fierce in his might, me he tried and gripped me with his ready claw. His glove hung, wide and wondrous, made fast with shrewd fastenings; it was all made in skilful wise with devils' wiles and of dragons' skin. His thought was, bold doer of evil, to put me therein, all blameless, and many a one beside; he might not so, when I stood upright in my wrath. Too long is it to tell how I paid the spoiler of the people his dues for each of his evils. There did I, my lord, do honor to thy people by my deeds. He fled away, had part for a while in the joys of life, though his hand kept his track in Heorot, and thence in abjectness, anguished in spirit, fell to the mere-bottom.

"For that deadly strife the friend of the Scyldings (when morning came and we had sat us to the feast) made me bounteous requital with plates of gold and many a treasure. There was song and mirth-making. The hoary Scylding, after questioning me oft, told of far-off days; whiles, the battle-famed prince woke the harp's joy, the pleasure-wood; whiles, he framed a lay true and sorrowful; whiles, the great-hearted king told in fitting wise some wondrous story; or at times again the white-haired warrior, in the bondage of age, began to mourn his youth and strength in battle; his heart swelled within him when he, in years so old, took thought of their number. Thus the day long we took our pleasure, till another night came to the children of men. Soon then thereafter was Grendel's mother ready to wreak vengeance for her hurt, fared forth in her sorrow; death, and the war-hate of the

Weders, had taken away her son. The grisly wife avenged her child; in her might she killed a man — life went forth there from Æschere, the old councillor. Nor might the Dane-folk with fire burn him, death-weary, when morning came, nor lift on the pyre him they loved; she bare off the corse in her fiendish clasp down under the mountain-stream. That was the sorest of the sorrows that long had beset Hrothgar, leader of his people. The prince, in grief of soul, adjured me then by thy life to achieve earlship in the moil of the waters, to risk my life and to win renown; he vowed me my meed for it. Then, as is known far and wide, I sought out the grim and grisly warden of the flood's depth. Hand there was locked in hand for a space. The flood welled with blood, and in that hall in the deeps with a matchless blade I hewed off the head of Grendel's mother. Not easily bare I my life away — not yet was I marked for death — but thereafter the shield of earls, the son of Healfdene, bestowed on me many a treasure."

XXXI. *How Beowulf gave Hrothgar's gifts to Hygelac and received gifts in return; how he succeeded to the throne of Hygelac and Heardred, and how a dragon, keeper of a treasure-hoard in his kingdom, took vengeance for a theft from it.*

"Even thus lived the people's king in due regard of right; in no wise did I lose my just due, the meed of my might, for he gave me treasures, did the son of Healfdene, even such as I myself might wish. These I desire to bring and to tender them thee with joy, O king of men. Still hath every good thing its beginning with thee; save thee I have few close kinsmen, O Hygelac."

He bade them bring in the head-crest in shape of a

boar, the helmet high uplifted in battle, the gray burnie, the war-sword wondrously wrought, and his tale framed after: "To me the wise prince Hrothgar gave this battle-gear, laid on me this one behest that first of all I should tell thee his friendship. He said that king Heorogar had it long, the prince of the Scyldings, yet this breast-mail he would not give to his own son, the brave Heoroweard, dear though he was to him. Have thy full joy of it all."

I heard that four horses, apple-fallow, wholly alike, went the same way as the trappings; honor he showed to Hygelac with horses and treasures. So must a kinsman do and not weave a net of cunning for the other, or with hidden craft devise the death of his close comrade. Faithful indeed was his nephew to Hygelac, the strong in battle, and each was mindful for the other's weal.

I heard that he gave to Hygd the collar, the wondrous treasure, marvellously wrought, that Wealhtheow, a king's daughter, gave him, and three horses also, trim of build and shining beneath the saddle. From that time, after the gift of the collar, was her breast well bedecked.

In such wise the warrior renowned, the son of Ecgtheow, bare him bravely through worthy deeds, lived lawfully, slew not at all, when drunken, his hearth-companions. Not ruthless was he of soul, but, bold in strife, kept ward with his utmost might of the generous gift that God had given him. Long had he been scorned, so that the children of the Geats held him unworthy, nor would the lord of the battle-hosts pay him much regard on the mead-bench. They thought surely he was slack, a laggard atheling. There came a change for him, well thriven in honors, from every despite.

Then the shield of earls, the king stout in battle, bade fetch in Hrethel's sword, mounted in gold ; there was not then among the Geats a better treasure in the like of a sword. He laid it on Beowulf's lap, and gave him seven thousand pieces, a hall, and a prince's high-seat. Both alike had land by birth-fee in the people's holding, a home, and an ancestral right; to the other beside was the broad kingdom, and in that was the better man.

That he attained afterward, in days to come, through shocks of battle, after Hygelac fell and the war-swords had slain Heardred beneath his shield's shelter, then when the War-Scylfings, stout warriors, sought him out among his victor-folk and overthrew the nephew of Hereric in war; thereafter was it the broad realm fell into the hand of Beowulf. He ruled it well for fifty years — old then was the king, warden of the land from long past — till that a dragon began to be masterful on dark nights, that on the high heath kept watch of a hoard in a lofty stone barrow. Below lay a path not known to men. Therein went some man or other, laid hold eagerly on the heathen hoard, took with his hand a cup gleaming with gold; he gave it not back though its keeper had been defrauded, as he slept, with thievish craft. The people, the dwellers in the towns, learned how that he was angered thereby.

XXXII. *Of the dragon's hoard and whence it came, and of his wrath at the loss of his cup.*

Not with intent and of his own will did this thane of some one of the sons of men, that did him this grievous injury, seek out the mighty dragon-hoard, but because of sore stress, in need of shelter, a man driven by guilt, he fled from blows of anger and betook him-

self therein. Soon it befell that hideous terror came upon the stranger in that dwelling, yet the wretched one, even as the horror seized him, caught sight of the treasure-cup.

There were many such olden treasures in the earth-house, just as some man, taking heedful care of the mighty heritage of his high kindred, had hid them there, his dear treasures, in days gone by. Death had taken his kinsfolk all away at an earlier time, and the one that of the warrior-host of that people still then longest held on his way, went sorrowing for his friends, yet trusted for such length of years that he might enjoy for a little while that wealth long-treasured. A barrow stood fully ready nigh the sea-waves on the moor, newly made on the foreland, closed fast by sure devices. The guardian of the rings bare within it there the lordly treasure, the heap hard to carry of plate-gold, and spake in few words: "Hold thou now, O earth, now that warriors may not, this wealth of earls. Behold, in thee at the first did good men find it. Death in battle, dread evil, hath taken off every man of my people that hath left this life; they had looked on the joys of the mead-hall. None have I that may wield sword, or burnish the gold-decked vessel or the drinking-cup of price; the warrior host is gone elsewhither. The hard helmet, bedight with its gold, must be spoiled of its platings; they sleep that burnished it, whose part it was to make ready the masks of war. And the battle-gear likewise, that withstood in strife, midst the crash of shields, the bite of the steel, shall crumble with the warrior. The ring-meshed burnie no longer may fare far with the war-prince at the warrior's side. Joy of the harp is not, or delight of the glee-wood; the good hawk swingeth not through

the hall, nor doth the swift steed paw the court of the stronghold. Death that despoileth hath sent forth many a one of living kind." Thus, sorrowful of heart, he made lament with grieving, he, left solitary, for them all — wept, reft of gladness, till the flood of death laid hold on his heart.

The old twilight-spoiler, the evil naked dragon, that flaming seeketh out the barrows and flieth by night enfolded in fire, found the joy-giving hoard standing open. Him the earth-dwellers dread exceedingly. He must needs seek out a hoard in the earth, where, old in years, he watcheth the heathen gold; no whit is he the better for it.

Thus three hundred years the spoiler of the people held in the earth a treasure-house, mighty in strength, till that a certain man made him wrathful of heart, bare away a cup of gold to his prince, prayed his lord for a bond of peace. Thus was the hoard despoiled, some part of the ring-treasure carried away, and his boon granted to the man in his need. His lord looked for the first time on that work of men of far-off days.

When the dragon awoke, strife was newly kindled. He snuffed along the rock and, stout of heart, came on the foot-tracks of his foe; in his furtive craft the man had gone too far, too near the dragon's head. So may one not marked for death, whom the grace of the Wielder stayeth, come forth full readily from his woes and the path of exile. The treasure-warden sought eagerly along the ground, and would fain find the man that had brought this harm on him in his sleep. Hot and savage of heart, he went often all about the mound without, but no man was there in that waste place. Yet had he joy in the coming of battle and the toils of war. Whiles, he went into the mound and sought

the treasure-cup; soon knew he for sure some man had found out his gold and his noble treasure. Scarce waited the treasure-keeper till evening came; angered was he then, the barrow-warden; the loathly one was of mind to take payment with fire for his precious cup. Then was the day gone, as the dragon desired. No longer would he bide within wall, but fared forth with flaming, girt with fire. A fearful thing was the feud's beginning for the people of the land, even as it was ended speedily in the hurt that befell their treasure-giver.

XXXIII. *Of the dragon's vengeance and Beowulf's resolve to encounter him.*

Then the stranger-one began to spew forth gledes and burn the bright homesteads; the glare of the burning struck terror into men; the loathly flyer through the air was minded to leave naught there alive. The dragon's might was seen far and wide, the fell intent of the instant foe near and far, how the war-spoiler hated and brought low the Geat-folk. He shot back, ere daybreak, to his hoard, to his lordly hall hidden from finding. The dwellers in the land he had beset with flame, with fire and burning. He trusted to his barrow, his war-craft and wall: the hope deceived him.

Speedily then was the terror of it made known to Beowulf for truth, in that his own homestead, fairest of houses, the gift-seat of the Geats, had been consumed in the surging flame. Grief of heart it was to the good king, the greatest of sorrows. The wise man deemed that he had angered bitterly the Ruler, the Eternal Lord, against the ancient law. His breast swelled within him with dark thoughts as was not the way with him.

The fire-drake with his flames had laid in ashes the stronghold, the people's fastness, on its island without. Therefore the war-king, prince of the Geats, planned vengeance upon him. The safeguard of warriors, lord of earls, bade be made for him a battle-shield of marvellous kind, all of iron; he knew readily wood of the forest might not help him, linden-wood against flame. The atheling passing worthy must needs abide the close of his life in the world, and the dragon with him, though he had kept for long his wealth of treasure.

The lord of rings scorned then to seek the far-flier with a host, a large army; he dreaded not the strife for himself, nor made he much of the dragon's skill in battle, of his strength and might, because that erstwhile, hazarding peril, he had come through many an onset, brunt of battle, after he, a hero rich in victory, had cleansed Hrothgar's hall, and in strife grappled Grendel's kinsfellow of that loathly race.

That was not the least of close encounters, in which they slew Hygelac, son of Hrethel, when in Friesland, in storm of battle, the king of the Geats, gracious lord of his people, died of the sword-drink, struck down by the war-blade. Beowulf came thence by his own might; he made use of his swimming. He had, he alone, thirty suits of armor when he went to the sea. In no wise needed the Hetwaras, who had borne out their shields against him, be boastful of their warcraft, for few came away afterward from the mighty hero to seek their homes.

The son of Ecgtheow, hapless and lonely, swam back, at that time, over the stretches of the sea to his people again. There Hygd proffered him the treasure and the kingdom, the rings, and the king's seat;

she trusted not her son that he would know how to hold his ancestral seats against stranger folk, seeing Hygelac was dead. Yet not for all that might they in their need in any wise prevail upon the atheling to be Heardred's lord or take on himself the kingdom, but he upheld him among the people with friendly counsel, and in kindly wise through the regard he showed him, till that he came of age and ruled the Weder-Geats. Outlawed men sought him from overseas, the sons of Ohthere; they had rebelled against the helm of the Scylfings, a prince renowned, the best of the sea-kings that gave out treasure in the Swedish realm. Of that came Heardred's end. The hapless son of Hygelac came by his death-wound through the stroke of the sword, and the son of Ongentheow went him back to seek his home, when Heardred lay dead, and let Beowulf hold the king's seat and rule the Geats. He was a good king!

XXXIV. *How Beowulf took revenge for Heardred; how he sought out the dragon's lair, and told of Herebeald and Hæthcyn.*

In after days he took thought of requital for the downfall of his lord; he was a friend to the hapless Eadgils, aided him across the broad sea with his host, his war-craft and weapons, when in after time the son of Ohthere took vengeance on Onela for his chill paths of sorrow, and robbed the king of his life. Thus the son of Ecgtheow had come safe from each strife, each hazardous battle and deed of prowess, till this one day that he must do battle against the dragon.

One of twelve, the lord of the Geats, angered exceedingly, went to look on the fire-drake. He had learned in what wise the feud toward men, the deadly strife, had arisen. The wondrous treasure-cup had

come to his lap through the hand of the finder. He that had brought about the strife's beginning was the thirteenth man in the company; held captive, sorrowful at heart, he must needs go thence with them to point out the place. Against his will he went where he knew that earth-hall to be, a burial-place beneath the ground, nigh the surge of the sea and the moil of the waters, that within was full of jewels and woven gold-work. Its fearful guardian, a ready wager of war, had held from of old his golden treasure beneath the earth. It was no easy bargain for any man to go in there.

Then the king, stout in strife, the gold-friend of the Geats, sat him on the foreland, whilst he bade his hearth-comrades farewell. His spirit was sad, flickering within him and ready for death. Wyrd was very near, that must assail the old man, seek out the treasure of his soul, part asunder life from body. Not long, then, was the life of the atheling enclosed in flesh.

Beowulf spake, the son of Ecgtheow: "In my youth I came safe from many a shock of battle and time of strife: I mind me of all. I was seven years old when the prince of treasure, the gracious lord of his people, King Hrethel, took me at my father's hands, held me and had me, gave me treasure and nurture, mindful of our kinship. I was no whit less loved by him during life as his man in hall than any of his sons, Herebeald and Hæthcyn, or mine own Hygelac. In unfitting wise was the death-bed strewn for the eldest of them by a kinsman's deeds, when Hæthcyn struck him down, his dear lord, with an arrow from his bow of horn; the mark he missed and shot his kinsman, one brother another with a bloody shaft. That was an onslaught gold might not atone for, done

of evil design, harrowing to the heart. Be that as it may, the atheling must lose his life unavenged. So also is it sorrowful for an old man to live to see his young son ride upon the gallows-tree; then he gives voice to his grief in words, his song of sorrow, when his son hangeth for a joy to the ravens, and he may not help him, do aught for him, old and burdened with years. Ever is he reminded each morn of his son's going hence; nor hath he wish to await another heir in his house, since one hath by dint of death learned the lesson of his deeds. Overborne by sorrow, he seeth in his son's house the wine-hall left wasted, a resting-place for winds, bereft of its joy; horseman and warrior sleep in the grave; sound of harp is not, nor joy in its courts as once there was.

XXXV. *Of Beowulf's meeting with the dragon after closing his discourse.*

"Then he goeth to his sleeping-place, and, lonely, singeth there his song of sorrow for the one he hath lost; all he hath, his lands and his dwelling-place, hath seemed too large for him alone.

"So, likewise, the helm of the Weders bare a heart swelling with sorrow for Herebeald; he might no whit avenge the feud on the slayer, nor yet spend his hate in deeds of enmity on the warrior, though he was not dear to him. Then, for the grief his heart caused him, he gave up the joys of men and chose the light of God; when he went from life, he left to his sons, as one doth that hath wealth, his land and folk-cities. Then was there hatred and strife betwixt the Swedes and the Geats, warfare over the wide water and fierce clash of war-hosts, after Hrethel died, till that the sons of Ongentheow were forward and keen in the struggle, would not keep peace over-seas, but oft

made forays in direful wise about Hreosnabeorh. This feud and these deeds of evil my kinsfolk avenged, as was known of all, though another paid for it with his life, a hard bargain; it was a fatal war for Hæthcyn, king of the Geats. Then in the morning, as I heard tell, one brother took vengeance on the other's slayer, when Ongentheow met Eofor. The war-helmet split apart; the old Scylfing fell livid beneath the stroke; Eofor's hand kept mind of feuds enough, it held not back from the death-blow. I then, in that strife, as it was given me to do, repaid Hygelac with my gleaming sword for the treasures he had bestowed on me; he gave over to me land, a homestead, and the joy of its holding. He had no need to be forced to seek from the Gifths, or the Spear-Danes, or in the Swedish lands, a worse warrior, and buy him for a price. Ever would I be in advance in his host, alone at the front, and so shall I, while life last, make fight, so long as the sword endureth, that oft early and late hath served me, ever since I, before the warrior-hosts, with my hand slew Dæghrefn, fore-fighter of the Hugs. In no wise might he bring trappings and breast-deckings to the Frisian king, but fell, the keeper of the standard, the atheling in his might, in our encounter. The sword's edge was not his slayer, but the battle-grip brake his ribs and his heart's beating. Now must the blade's edge, the hand, and the stout sword, wage war for the treasure."

Beowulf spake, gave forth word of vaunting for the last time: "In my youth I came safe from many a battle; yet, if the fell spoiler seek me out from his earth-hall, will I, the old warden of my people, seek the strife, do deeds worthy praise."

He greeted then for the last time each of his men,

he, the bold helmet-bearer, his dear comrades: "I would bear no sword or other weapon against the dragon, even as I once did with Grendel, wist I how I might else make good my vaunt against the monster. But I may look for hot battle-fire there, for reek and for poison; for this cause I have upon me shield and burnie. Not a foot's length will I give back from the keeper of the barrow, but it shall befall us in fight at the wall, as Wyrd, the ruler of all men, may grant. I am keen of heart so that I forego boasting against the flying foe. Await ye, ye men in your war-gear, clad in your burnies, whether of us twain may fare the better of our wounds after our fight to the death. It is no venture for you, nor is it meet for any man to use his strength against the monster, achieve earlship, save for me alone. By my might shall I gain the gold, or battle, life's peril, shall take your lord."

Then the brave warrior, strong beneath his helmet, rose with his shield, bore his battle-sark beneath the stony steeps, trusted in the strength of a single man; such is not the way of a coward. He that, goodly in manly virtue, had come forth from full many a strife and shock of battle, when the foot-bands meet, beheld by the wall an arch of stone standing and a stream breaking out thence from the barrow. The stream's flood was hot with battle-fires; the hero might not endure anywhile, without burning, the stretch below, nigh the hoard, because of the dragon's fire.

Then the prince of the Weder-Geats, for that he was angered, let a word go forth from his breast. The strong of heart stormed; his voice came sounding in, battle-clear, under the hoar stone. Hate was roused; the treasure-warden was ware of the hero's speech; there was no more time to seek for peace.

First there came forth from the stone the breath of the monster, the hot fuming of battle. The earth resounded. The warrior beneath the barrow, the lord of the Geats, swung round his battle-shield against the grisly foe. Then was the heart of the coiling one made eager to seek the strife. The good war-king had ere then drawn his sword, handed down from of old, not slow of edge. Terror came to those plotters of harm, each of the other. The ruler o'er friends stood, steadfast of heart, against his broad shield whilst the dragon coiled quickly; in his war-gear he waited.

Then came moving on the fiery one, bowed together, hastening to his fate. Inasmuch as Wyrd had not dealt the great king triumph in the strife, his shield guarded well life and body less long than his desire to be let conquer at that time there in the day's prime had looked for. The Lord of the Geats lifted up his hand and struck the fell foe with his mighty sword, so the shining edge weakened on the bone, bit with less might than the folk-king, encompassed with evils, had need of. Savage of heart then was the warden of the barrow because of the battle-stroke, and cast forth deadly fire; the fierce flamings of it sprang far and wide. The friend of the Geats was not to boast a far-famed victory. His naked war-sword, his blade passing good, had weakened in the strife as it ought not. No easy journey was it for the son of Ecgtheow to leave the earth-plain; unwilling he must make his home in a dwelling-place elsewhere, for so must every man lay aside the days that pass from him.

It was not long before the fighters met together once more. The keeper of the hoard took heart; his breast rose once again with his breathing. The prince, he that erstwhile had ruled his people, suffered straits,

hemmed in by the flames. Not at all did his own close comrades, sons of athelings, stand about him in press, showing courage in battle, but betook them to the woods to save their lives. The soul of but one of them swelled with sorrow; naught can ever set aside kinship in sight of him that judgeth aright.

XXXVI. *How Wiglaf reproached his comrades, and went to Beowulf's aid, and how Beowulf was wounded.*

Wiglaf was he named, the son of Weohstan, prince of the Scylfings, kinsman of Ælfhere, a loved shield-warrior. He saw his lord beneath the battle-mask laboring from the heat. He bethought him then of all the honors the prince had in former days bestowed upon him, the wealthy homestead of the Wægmundings and every folkright his father owned. He might not then hold back, grasped his shield, the yellow linden, with his hand, and drew his old sword. That sword was left among men by Eanmund, son of Ohthere, whom, as a friendless exile, Weohstan slew in the strife with the edge of his war-brand, and bare to his kinsman his shining helm, his ring-knit burnie, the old sword of eotens Onela had given him, war-weeds of a comrade, his battle-gear ready for foray. Weohstan spake not of the feud, though he had felled the son of the brother of Onela. He kept the trappings many a year, the sword and burnie, till his son Wiglaf might achieve earlship as his father had erstwhile done. He gave then to Wiglaf among the Geats every sort of battle-gear in countless number, and went forth, being old, on his way hence.

That was the first time the young warrior had need to take part with his dear lord in the storm of battle. His soul melted not away, nor did the sword be-

queathed by his kinsman weaken in the strife; this the dragon learned when they met together.

Wiglaf spake many a righteous word, for his spirit was sorrowful, and said to his comrades: "I mind me, the time we drank the mead, we vowed then to our lord in the beer-hall, who gave us these rings, that we would requite him for our war-gear, the helmets and swords of temper, if this-like need should befall him. He chose us for this venture of his own will from his host, roused us to deeds of glory, and gave me these treasures, because he held us to be good wagers of war with the spear, brave wearers of helmet, even though he, our lord, guardian of his people, thought to achieve this deed of might alone, for that he among all men hath wrought the most of feats of prowess and daring deeds.

"Now is the day come that our liege-lord hath need of the might of good warriors. Let us go to him, help our leader in battle, whilst the heat endure, the grim terror of the flame. God knoweth of me I would much liefer the fire should enfold my body with that of my giver of gold. Unmeet it seemeth me we should bear our shields back home save we first fell the might of the foe, and guard the life of the prince of the Weders. I trow well it were not his due, long owed him, that he alone of the flower of the Geats should bear the trouble and sink in the strife. Sword and helm, burnie and shield, shall be one between us."

He went then through the slaughter-reek, bore his helmet to his lord's aid: "Dear Beowulf, do all well, even as thou didst vow aforetime in thy youth, that thou wouldst not, yet living, let thy glory fall away. Now must thou, steadfast atheling, famed for thy deeds, guard thy life with all thy might. I shall aid thee."

After these words the dragon, the foe fell and fearful, came in wrath a second time, bedight with surges of flame, to seek the men, his loathing. The shield of the young spearsman burned to the boss in the waves of fire, and his burnie might yield him no aid. But the young retainer went him speedily under his kinsman's shield, for his own was consumed utterly by the fire. Then once more the war-king bethought him of the meeds of glory, and in the might of his strength struck with his war-sword, so that it drave into the dragon's head, urged by hate. Nægling was broken; the sword of Beowulf, old and gray-hued, betrayed him in the strife; it was not given him that edge of steel might help him in the battle. His hand was too strong, as I have heard tell, trying overmuch any sword by its blow; when he bore to the fight a weapon wondrous hard, no whit was he the better for it.

Then the spoiler of the people, the fell fire-drake, was of mind a third time for the strife, rushed, hot and battle-grim, upon the valiant one, when he gave him ground, and with his bitter fangs took in all the throat of the hero. Beowulf was bloodied with his life-blood; the blood welled forth in waves.

XXXVII. *How the dragon was slain, and how Beowulf bade the treasure be brought to him.*

I heard tell that then in the folk-king's need his earl gave proof of lasting prowess, of the strength and boldness born in him. He heeded not the head of the dragon, albeit the brave man's hand was burned in aiding his kinsman, so he might, the mailed warrior, smite the fell foe a little lower, in such wise the shining sword, decked with gold, sank in, and the fire thereafter began to fail. Then the king came to himself once

more, and drew the war-dagger, bitter and sharp for battle, he wore on his burnie. The helm of the Weders cut the dragon in two in the middle. They felled the foe, their prowess cast forth his life, and they both, kinsman athelings, had overthrown him. Such a man should a warrior, a retainer, be in time of need.

That was the last triumphant hour, through his own deed, of the king's work in this world. The wound the earth-dragon before had given him began then to burn and swell. He soon found that a dire evil, poison within, was rising in his breast. The atheling, wise of thought, went him then to sit on a seat by the wall; he looked on the work of giants, how the stone-arches, firm upon their pillars, upheld within the ever-enduring earth-hall. His retainer, worthy beyond telling, laved then with his hands with water the king far-famed, his own dear lord, bloodstained and spent with battle, and loosed his helmet.

Beowulf brake forth in speech, spake despite his hurt, his livid death-wound; he knew well he had had his day's while and the pleasures of earth, that all his tale of days was past now and death ever so near: "Now would I give my war-weeds to my son, had but any heir belonging to my body been given to follow me. I have ruled the people fifty years; no folk-king was there of them that dwelt about me durst touch me with his sword or cow me through terror. I bided at home the hours of destiny, guarded well mine own, sought not feuds with guile, swore not many an oath unjustly. Therefore, though sick now unto death with my wounds, I may have joy of it all, in that the Ruler of Men may not blame me for murder of kinsmen, when life leaveth my body.

"Now go thou quickly, dear Wiglaf, to look on the hoard under the hoar rock, now that the worm lieth slain, sleepeth sore wounded, bereft of his treasure. Be in haste now, so I may see the old wealth-holdings, the treasure of gold, and behold with gladness the bright jewels curiously set; so may I, because of this wealth of treasure, the softlier yield up my life and lordship I have held for long."

XXXVIII. *Of Beowulf's death after seeing the treasure.*

Then, as I heard tell, the son of Weohstan hearkened quickly after these words the bidding of his wounded lord, sick from the strife, and bore his ring-mesh, his woven battle-sark, under the roof of the barrow. The valorous thane, rejoicing in victory, when he had passed by the seat, saw many a jewel of price, gold glittering strewn on the ground, wondrous things on the wall, and the den of dragon, the old twilight-flier, — jars standing, vessels of men of far-off days, with no one to burnish them, stripped of their deckings. Many a helmet was there, old and rusted, and many an arm-ring, woven with shrewd skill. Store of treasure, gold in the earth, may easily make any one of mankind over-proud, let him hide it that will. Likewise he saw a standard all of gold hanging high over the hoard, most wondrous of works, weft by skilled craft. A light came from it, so he might see the floor and look over the treasures. No sign of the dragon was there, for the sword's edge had taken him away.

I heard tell that one man then despoiled the hoard within the barrow, the ancient handiwork of giants, and filled his bosom as he willed with wine-cups and platters; the standard also, brightest of beacons, he took away. The sword of the old king with its edge

of iron had ere then given its hurt to him that long time had been keeper of the treasure and had waged at midnight the fire's terror, flooding forth, in deadly wise, hot before the hoard, till that he died a bloody death.

The messenger was in haste; he was eager to go back, spurred on by the treasures. Desire fretted him, the high-souled youth, to know if he should find the lord of the Weders, so sorely sick, alive still in the place where he had left him. Then, with the treasures, he found the mighty prince, his lord, bleeding, at his life's end. Once more he began to cast water upon him, till the word's point brake through the hidden thought of the breast.

Beowulf spake; the old man in his sorrow looked on the gold: "For these treasures I here behold I give thanks in words to the Lord of All, the King of Glory, the Eternal Lord, for that it is given me ere the day of death to win the like for my people. Now have I trafficked the laying down of my life, nigh spent, for this hoard of treasure. Look ye now to my people's needs, I may be here no longer. Bid the battle-famed warriors build me a fair mound after the burning on the sea-headland. It shall lift itself, for a reminder to my people, high on the Whale's Ness, that seafarers hereafter, that drive their deep ships afar o'er the mist of the floods, shall call it Beowulf's Barrow."

The brave-hearted prince took from his neck a golden circlet, gave to his thane, the young spearsman, his gold-decked helm, his ring, and his burnie, and bade him have his joy of them; "Thou art the last of the Wægmundings, our kindred; Wyrd hath taken away all my kinsmen, the earls in their might to their fate. I must after them."

That was the last thought of the old king's heart, ere he made choice of the pyre, the hot death-surges. His soul went forth from his bosom to find the award of the steadfast in right.

[XXXIX]. *How Wiglaf spoke his scorn of his comrades.*

Then it went sorely indeed with the youth to see his dearest one laid on the earth at his life's end meeting stress so sore. His slayer lay there likewise, the grisly earth-dragon, bereft of life, overborne by his spoiling. The dragon with his twisting coils might no longer rule his treasure-hoards, for the edge of the steel, the hard handiwork of hammers, nicked in battle, had taken him hence, so that the far-flier fell to the ground, stilled by his wounds, nigh to his treasure-house; in no wise might he sweep sporting through the air at midnight, make show of himself, proud of his treasure-holdings, for he fell to earth through the handiwork of the leader in battle. Truly, as I have heard tell, it profiteth men but few, through might-possessing and daring in every deed, for one to make onset against a poison-breathing spoiler, or lay hand to his treasure-hall, should he find the warden waking and housed in his barrow. A deal of lordly treasure was paid for by Beowulf through his death. Each had come to the end of this life that passeth.

It was not long then that the laggards in war gave up the wood, the traitorous weaklings, ten of them together, that durst not erstwhile make play with their spears in their liege-lord's dire need, but who bare now, with shamed faces, their shields and war-weeds, where the old man lay. They looked on Wiglaf. Wearied he sat, he, the retainer, at his lord's shoulder, and tried to rouse him with water. No whit it

availed him; eagerly as he might wish it, he might not keep life in his leader, nor turn one whit the will of the Ruler. God's doom was law in ruling the deeds of every man, as now still it doth.

To the youth then was a grim answer easy to find for those whose courage before that had left them. Wiglaf spake, the son of Weohstan; sorrowful of heart, the hero looked on them he scorned: "This, lo! may he say that hath mind to speak the truth, that the lord ye owned, who gave ye the treasures, the war-gear ye stand in, then, when he on the ale-bench oft bestowed on those sitting in the hall, he the king on his thanes, helmets and burnies such as were the goodliest he might find far or near, that he then, first and last, in wretched wise threw away that battle-gear, so soon as warfare should befall him. Surely not at all had the folk-king need to boast of his comrades in battle — yet God, the Giver of Victory, willed it for him that he all alone, when he had need of prowess, should approve himself with the sword's edge. I was able to give him but little aid in guarding his life in the struggle, and yet, howsoever beyond my power, I did make beginning to help my kinsman. Ever, when I struck the deadly foe with my sword, was he worse for it, and the fire surged less strongly from his head. Defenders too few thronged about the king when the hour came to him. Now shall taking of treasure and gift of swords, every joy you were born to, and right of subsistence, fail from your kindred. Every man of your homesteads shall go void of his land-right, after athelings afar hear tell of your flight, of your infamous deed. Death is better for every earl than a life of dishonor."

XL. *How tidings of Beowulf's death were carried*

to his people; of the messenger's forebodings respecting the Swedes and Frisians, and his recountal of the fight at Ravens' Wood.

Then he bade word be given of the battle's toil to the fastness up over the sea-cliff, where the band of earls, sorrowful of heart, had sat holding their shields the day long since morning, looking for one of these two, his last day or the home-coming of the dear warrior. He who rode up the headland was silent touching little of the new tidings, but told them truly in hearing of all: "Now is the lord of the Geats, the bountiful giver of the Weder-folk, fast in the bed of death; on the resting-place of slaughter he abideth by the dragon's doing. Beside him lieth the life-queller, sickened by the dagger's thrusts; with his sword he might deal no wound to the monster. Wiglaf, the son of Weohstan, sitteth over Beowulf, one earl beside the other lying lifeless, holdeth head-watch with reverent care for friend and foe.

"Now is a time of war to be looked for by the people when the fall of the king becometh known far and wide to Franks and Frisians. The grievous strife with the Hugs was conceived when Hygelac came faring with a fleet to the Frisians' land, when the Hetware humbled him in battle, speedily attained through greater might, that the armed warrior must bow him to his fall. He fell in the midst of his fighting-bands; he, the leader, gave out no treasure to the warriors. The good-will of the Merovingian hath ever since been withheld from us.

"Nor do I look any whit for peace or good-faith from the Swede-folk, for it was known far and wide that Ongentheow robbed Hæthcyn Hrethling of life nigh Ravens' Wood, when in reckless pride the War-Scylfings first sought the Geat-folk. Soon the old father of Ohthere, ancient and terrible in battle, gave an answering blow, slew the king skilled in sea-craft, set free from captivity his wife, mother of Onela and Ohthere — he the old man, his consort, bereft of her gold — and followed then

his deadly foes till they might barely flee away to the Ravens' Wood, their leader lost. Then with an exceeding host he beset those the sword had left, spent with their wounds, oft the night long menaced that forlorn band with woe, said that in the morning he would slay some with the sword's edge, some on the gallows-tree to be a joy to the birds. Comfort came again to them, sorrowful of heart, with the first of the day, so soon as they heard Hygelac's horn and trumpet-call, when the good king came following along their track with the flower of his people."

XLI. *Of the outcome of the battle.*

"The bloody pathway of Swedes and Geats, the storm of slaughter of the fighters, was plain to see far and wide, how the one folk and the other together had spurred on the strife. Ongentheow, goodly warrior, old and much-sorrowing, went him then with his comrades to seek his fastness, and turned him toward the heights. He had heard tell of Hygelac's prowess in war, his glorious might in battle, and he trusted not to withstand him, to be able to hold back the sea-men, the ocean-voyagers, or to keep his hoard, his children, and wife; the old man bent him back thence to his wall of earth.

"Chase then was given to the Swede-folk, and their standard to Hygelac; they went forth over the plain of peace, after the Hrethlings thronged up to the fastness. The white-haired Ongentheow was brought to a halt there by the sword's edge, in such wise the folk-king must yield him to the single will of Eofor. Wrathfully Wulf Wonreding reached for him with his weapon, so that the blood from the blow sprang forth from his veins beneath his hair. Nevertheless the old Scylfing was not dismayed, but repaid forthwith that death-stroke with a worse return, after he, the folk-king, had turned toward him, nor might the swift son of Wonred give an answering blow, for the old man had already shorn through the helmet on his head so that he must bow him blood-stained, and fall to earth; not as yet was he given over to death, for he grew well again, though the wound had laid hold on him. Then the doughty thane of Hygelac, when his brother was laid low, let his broad blade, the old sword forged by the eotens, break, over across the shield's wall, the giant-huge helmet. Then Ongentheow, the king, the shepherd of his people, bowed him down; he was hurt to the life. There were many then that bound up Eofor's brother, lifted him speedily, when it was

granted them to have command of the battlefield, the while the warrior spoiled the other, took from Ongentheow his burnie of iron, hard hilted sword, and helmet therewith, bare to Hygelac the old man's war-gear. He took the trappings and made Eofor fair promise of reward before the people, and likewise fulfilled it. The lord of the Geats, the son of Hrethel, when he came to his home, repaid Eofor and Wulf for their stress of battle with exceeding treasure, gave each of them a hundred thousand pieces' worth of land and linked rings, nor durst any man on earth make scorn of the reward, seeing they had wrought deeds of fame with their swords. And further, of his grace, he gave Eofor his only daughter to wed, to be a pride to his home."

"This is the feud and the hatred, the mortal strife between men, by reason of which, as I foresee, because of the fall of their warriors, the Swede-folk, the bold Scylfings, will seek us out, when they hear that our lord is lifeless, he that erstwhile held hoard and realm against them that hate us, acted for his people's good, or, yet more, did deeds of earlship.

"Now it is best as soon as may be that we look upon our folk-king, where he lies, and bring him, that gave us rings, on his way to the pyre. Nor shall a part only consume away with the valiant one, for the hoard of treasure is there, gold uncounted, dearly bought, and even now, at the last, he purchased these rings with his own life; these shall the flame swallow up, the fire hide away, nor forsooth shall an earl wear these treasures for remembrance, nor fair maid have the ring-jewel about her neck, but, sad of heart, reft of her gold, oft and not once alone, shall tread the land of exile, now that the leader in battle has laid aside laughter, revel, and the joys of mirth. Because of this shall many a spear, cold in the dawning, be held in close clasp, lifted up in the hand; the sound of the harp shall in no wise rouse up the warrior, but the

dark raven, all alert over the fallen, shall utter his cry over and over, and tell the eagle how well he hath sped at the feasting, the while with the wolf he despoiled the slain." Thus it was the bold warrior told his hateful tidings; he told little enough untrue in his words or forebodings.

The band all arose and went in sorrow, with welling tears, beneath the Eagles' Ness to look on the sight strange to see. They found him who had given them rings in former days making his bed of rest lifeless on the sand. The last day of the good warrior had come in such wise that he, the war-king, the prince of the Weders, had died a death to marvel at. First there they saw the strange wight, the loathly worm, lying on the plain before him. The fire-drake, grim and grisly, was scorched with fire; he was fifty foot-lengths long as he lay. Erstwhile by night he had for his own the joys of the air, and went him down thereafter to seek his den; now he was fast in death and had made last use of his earth-caves. By him stood cups and jars; dishes rested there and costly swords, rusted and eaten through, even as they had lain housed there in the earth's bosom a thousand years. That inheritance exceeding mighty, the gold of men of olden time, had then been placed under a spell, so that no man might lay hand on the ring-hall, unless God Himself, the true King of Victory, Who is man's safeguard, should grant it to him He pleased, even such a man as seemed to Him meet, to open the hoard.

XLII. *Of Wiglaf's discourse concerning Beowulf, of the plundering of the hoards, and the casting of the dragon into the sea.*

Then was it plain to see that he who wrongfully plundered the treasure therein beneath the wall throve

not in his venture. Its warden first slew some few of the folk, and then was the feud fulfilled with vengeance in wrathful wise. Matter for wonder is it in what place it shall befall, when an earl, renowned for his prowess, shall reach the end of his life's span, when a man may no longer dwell in the mead-hall with his kinsfolk. So was it with Beowulf when he sought the warden of the barrow and that shrewd encounter; of himself he knew not in what wise his parting from the world would come. The mighty prince who placed the treasure there so laid it under a deep curse till Doomsday, that the man who should spoil that place should be guilty of sin, prisoned in evil places, made fast in hell-bonds, and punished with plagues. The hero was not eager for treasure; rather had he first looked for the grace of the Owner of All.

Wiglaf spake, the son of Weohstan: "Oft must many earls through the act of one man suffer evil, even as hath happened to us. We might not make our dear lord, shepherd of his people, accept aught of good counsel, not to meet the warden of the gold, but to let him lie where he had long been, and abide in his dwelling-place till the world's end. He held to his high destiny. The hoard is ours to see, come to us in woeful wise; too hard was the fate that drew the king thither.

"I was therein and looked upon it all, on the treasures in the hall, seeing it was granted me, though surely not in friendly wise, and a way allowed me in under the earth-wall. With haste I grasped with my hands a great and mighty burden of the hoarded treasure and bare it out hither to my king. He was still alive, aware of what passed and having his understanding. Of full many things spake the old man in his grief,

and bade greet you all, and asked that ye build, because of your friend's deeds, on the place where his pyre should stand, a barrow lofty, great and memorable, even as he was of men the warrior worthiest through the wide earth, whilst he might have joy in the wealth of his cities.

"Let us now haste to behold a second time and to search out the heaped-up treasure, curiously fashioned, this marvel that is beneath the wall. I shall guide you so ye may see, nigh at hand, rings and broad gold enough. Let the bier, looked to straightway, be ready when we come forth, and then let us bear our lord, the one we loved, where he must long wait him in the Almighty's keeping."

The son of Weohstan, the warsman bold in battle, gave order that many of the warriors, such as owned dwellings and ruled the folk, be bidden fetch wood for the pile from afar to where the king should be burned: "Now shall the fire, the dark flame as it waxeth, swallow up the strength of warriors, who oft hath breasted the iron shower, when the storm of shafts, sped by the string, shot over the shield-wall, and the arrow, spurred by its feathering, fulfilled its duty, drave home the barb."

Speedily the wise son of Woehstan called together from the king's following seven of the best thanes, and went, as one of eight, beneath the roof of the foe. One of the warriors who went before them bare in his hand a burning light. There was no taking of lots as to who should spoil that hoard after the men had seen any of it resting unguarded and lying at loss in the hall; little did any mourn at bearing thence most speedily the precious treasure. They thrust the dragon also, the worm, over the sea-cliff, let the wave take

him, the flood enfold the warden of the treasure. Then was the twisted gold, quite beyond reckoning, loaded upon a wain, and the atheling was borne, the gray battle-prince, to the Whale's Ness.

XLIII. *Of the burning of Beowulf, and the building of Beowulf's Barrow, and of their remembering him with praise.*

Then the Geat-folk made ready for him a pile, as he had prayed them, firmly based on the earth and hung with helmets and shields and bright burnies; with grief the warriors laid in the midst of it their great prince, their lord beloved. Then began the warriors to quicken on the cliff the greatest of death-fires; the wood-smoke rose dark above the pitchy flame, while the fire roared, blent with the sound of weeping as the turmoil of the wind ebbed, till, hot in the hero's breast, it had crumbled the bone-frame. With thoughts left void of gladness and with sorrow of heart, they made their lament for their liege-lord's death. His wife, likewise, in deepest grief, her hair close bound, made her song of mourning again and yet again for Beowulf — that she foresaw with grievous dread days of evil for herself, many a death-fall, terror of battle, shame and captivity.

Heaven swallowed up the smoke. Then the Weder-folk built a burial-mound on the cliff that was high and broad, seen afar by the seafarer, and they made it, the beacon of the one who was mighty in battle, in ten days. They carried a wall about the remains of the fire, the goodliest they who were most wise might contrive. In the barrow they placed the rings and jewels, all the trappings likewise which the men of bold heart had taken before from the hoard. They let the earth keep the treasures of earls and the gold

lie in the ground where it still now abideth, as useless to men as it was aforetime.

Then about the mound rode the sons of athelings brave in battle, twelve in all. They were minded to speak their sorrow, lament their king, frame sorrow in words and tell of the hero. They praised his earlship and did honor to his prowess as best they knew. It is meet that a man thus praise his liege-lord in words, hold him dear in his heart, when he must forth from the body to become as a thing that is naught.

So the Geat-folk, his hearth-comrades, grieved for their lord, said that he was a king like to none other in the world, of men the mildest and most gracious to men, the most friendly to his people and most eager to win praise.

NOTES

[*References are to pages. Matters sufficiently explained in the introduction are not annotated. No comment is made upon the names of persons or peoples introduced incidentally into the poem, in cases where no information is available except such as would be of interest and value only to the special student. Discussion of textual points and difficult passages, it need hardly be added, is in general uncalled for in a volume designed for the general student and reader.*]

1. **Spear-Danes**: The Danes, in allusion to their valor, wide dominions, or their ruling house (the Scyldings, or descendants of Scyld), are called Spear-Danes, Ring- or Armor-Danes, Bright-Danes; East-, West-, South-, and North-Danes; Scyldings, Victor-Scyldings, etc. They are also called Hrethmen and Ingwines. The Geats similarly are called Weders, or Weder-Geats, Sea or War-Geats, and the Swedes are called Scylfings.

1. **In his need**: Scyld drifted to the shores of the Danes, as a helpless infant in a boat which bare also much treasure; compare the later reference on p. 2 ("Truly with no less," etc.).

1. **Beowulf**: The son of Scyld, not Beowulf the Geat, the hero of the poem.

1. **Scedelands**: Also Scedenig; part of the Danish kingdom, situated according to a generally accepted view at the extreme southern part of the Scandinavian peninsula; here used for the whole kingdom.

3. **Sæwela's queen**: This rendering follows Kluge's reconstruction of an illegible passage in the manuscript, based on a mention in the "Hrolf Saga" of a daughter of Healfdene and her husband. Grein's reconstruction, hitherto adopted in default of a better, assumes a daughter Elan, married to Ongentheow. Trautmann has suggested the names Yrde and Onela.

3. **Mid-earth**: The earth, according to Teutonic mythology, as surrounded by the sea.

3. **Warring surges . . . of loathly flame**: The poet refers to the final destruction of the hall, not described in the poem. The hatred and strife referred to is that between Hrothgar and Ingeld: see the note on p. 55 ("Therefore," etc.).

3. **One spake that knew**: A Christian interpolation, inappropriate if meant to give the burden of the gleeman's song. The poem elsewhere usually discriminates the fact that the period of the story is heathen. The attribution to Grendel below of a descent from Cain is a notable Christian addition.

4. **Eotens**: The giants of Teutonic mythology. The Anglo-Saxon word is retained as characteristic, and because of the use, just below, of *gigantas*, giants, a borrowing from the Latin.

6. **The thane of Hygelac**: Beowulf the Geat, the hero of the poem. The land of the Geats, the kingdom of Hygelac, is held to have been in the southern part of the Scandinavian peninsula, north of Scedenig (see note on "Scedelands," p. 1).

9. **The graven boars**: Images of boars serving as crests on their helmets.

11. **At the shoulder**: Literally "before the shoulders;" variously interpreted as implying a position before or behind the king.

13. **Weland**: The famous smith of Teutonic legend.

13. **Wyrd**: The Teutonic Fate; a personification of unalterable destiny.

24. **Between the seas**: Probably proverbial like our "East or West," "North or South;" by some considered possibly to refer specifically to the North Sea and the Baltic.

24. **Sigemund**: The earliest recorded version of this famous exploit; here related of Sigemund, it is later, in the Icelandic "Völsunga Saga" and the German "Niebelungenlied," attributed to Sigurd, or Siegfried, his son, and thence appears, in modern literature, in Wagner's opera, the "Siegfried," and in William Morris's "Sigurd the Volsung." The different versions go back to a common original, and in that original the exploit may have belonged to the father, to be afterwards attracted into the greater cycle concerning his son.

The independent episodes in the poem are, as in the present case, distinguished by the use of smaller type, a helpful device first employed by Clark Hall and adopted also by Tinker.

25. **Heat made end of the dragon**: Referring, probably, to the dragon's own fire, which consumed him after death. The

poem speaks of the dragon which Beowulf fights as scorched by his own fire ; see p. 82.

25. **Heremod**: Heremod provides a contrast to Beowulf, as Sigemund's bravery affords a parallel. Heremod is later cited by Hrothgar in counselling Beowulf; see p. 47. Heremod, in place of cherishing his people, oppressed them, owing apparently to a dark and brooding temper, or to madness. Thus he became a perilous burden to his people, and in old age, when his strength failed, was betrayed into the hands of the Eotens, identified in general with the Jutes, and to be distinguished in the poem from the eotens, or giants.

30. **Through the sons of Finn**: A brief summary of a story known to have existed in an epic of some length among the Anglo-Saxons from a fragment found in Lambeth Palace (see p. iv). This fine fragment runs as follows : —

" . . . the gables surely are not burning ? " Spake then the king, young in battle : " Day dawneth not from the east, nor here doth a dragon fly, nor here are the gables of this hall aflame, but they bear forth the boar, the birds of battle sing, the gray burnie ringeth, the war-wood maketh clamor, shield answereth shaft. Now shineth the moon, wandering behind the clouds; now deeds of woe take their beginning that shall give rise to the vengeful hatred of this people. But waken ye now, my warriors, have your shields in hand, be forward in the fight, be brave."

Then rose many a thane, well dight with gold, girded on them their swords. The lordly warriors Sigeferth and Eaha went then to the doors, and drew their swords, and Ordlaf and Guthlaf went to be at the other doors, and Hengest himself followed in their lead.

Then Garnef urged Guthere that they should not in the first onset bear in harness life so noble to the doors of the hall, now the warrior stout in battle was minded to despoil it, but he asked, the warrior bold of heart, before them all in no secret wise who held the door : " Sigeferth is my name," said he ; " I am prince of the Secges, a freebooter known far and wide. Many a sorrow have I lived through and sore encounter ; still is assured thee here whatsoever thou thyself wilt seek from me."

Then at the wall was there din of mortal conflict ; the curved shield in the hands of the valiant must needs shatter the bone-

helm. The hall-floor resounded, till in the fight Garnef, son of Guthlaf, fell first of earth-dwellers there, and about him many good men. The raven wheeled on the wing about the slain, wandered swart and dusky-gleaming. The flash of the swords was as if all Finnesburh were afire. Never heard I tell of sixty victor-warriors bearing themselves in strife of warsmen more worthily and better, nor ever did swains pay better for the sweet mead than did his warrior-folk pay Hnæf.

Five days they fought in such wise that none of their fellowship fell; but they held the doors. There went then a wounded warrior away, said his burnie was broken, his battle-mail made of none avail, and his helmet thrust through as well. Then straightway asked him the shepherd of the people how the warriors had come forth from their wounds, or which of the youths . . .

A reconstruction of the story from the version in "Beowulf" and this fragment is beset with difficulties, the proper translation of both being in several places a matter of doubt and the account in "Beowulf" merely a rapid outline. Two typical attempts that have won some acceptance are as follows.

Finn, the Frisian, having carried off Hoc's daughter, Hildeburh, is pursued by Hoc, who is killed. Hnæf and Hengest, his sons, when grown of age, invade Finn's country seeking revenge, and in the battle which ensues so many are killed on both sides that a compact of peace is made. Hnæf has been killed, but Hengest, remaining with his men till the spring, broods on revenge and does not go when spring comes. The Frisians, perceiving his half-formed design, fall upon him at night in the hall and, in the attack described in part in the fragment above, slay all his men except Guthlac and Oslaf, who escape and return with an army, slay Finn, and carry Hildeburh back to her own land.

The second version is that Finn has married Hildeburh, and Hnæf, her brother, is staying with her. A quarrel takes place, and Hnæf falls in a night attack (that of the fragment). A compact of peace is made, one condition being that the feud is not to be spoken of. Hengest, however, secretly designs revenge, and with this intent treacherously becomes Finn's liegeman (see the note which follows). Later, Guthlac and Oslaf, sent for aid by Hengest, return with a fresh body of Danes, Finn is killed, and Hildeburh carried away.

The latter version, in various forms, is now more generally

accepted, but so many difficult points are involved that it is best to consider the whole matter still unsettled.

31. **Thus it was**: This passage has been variously interpreted in conjunction with the several attempts which have been made to recover the story. In connection with the first of the versions above it is construed to mean that Hengest was slain by Finn with a sword, Hunlafing, or by Hun (a follower of Finn; the name occurs in "Widsith") with a sword, Lafing. In connection with the second version, it is interpreted to mean that Hengest through craft did not refuse to become Finn's liegeman, when (as a ceremonial act) Finn laid Hunlafing (his sword) on his breast, or when Hun (as above), acting for Finn, laid Lafing (a sword) on his breast.

32. **As yet they were at peace**: The story implied here is not known. The nephew is Hrothulf.

33. **The collar of the Brosings**: The *Brisinga men* of the Eddas, or jewelled collar of the goddess Freyja. Hama is known in Germanic legend as Heime, but not this story. Eormenric is the great Hermanric of history, king of the Ostrogoths.

33. **Hygelac . . . on his last foray**: Hygelac's foray against the Frisians; see p. viii.

45. **XXIV, XXV**. The 25th division of the poem, marked in the manuscript at line 1740, begins apparently in the middle of a sentence ("till that within him a deal of overweening pride," etc.; see p. 48), and the two divisions are here, accordingly, run together.

53. **Thrytho**: Introduced as a contrast to Hygd. Jealous pride and haughtiness, leading to morbid suspicions, with a cruel temper, caused her to order the death of certain of her father's (or husband's) followers, till (as another or further story tells) a happy marriage (possibly her second) wrought a change in her.

54. **XXVIII–XXX**: The 29th and 30th divisions are not marked. A capital letter appears at l. 2039, where there is apparently no break.

55. **Oft and again . . . be goodly**: Kluge's interpretation; the passage might also read "after the prince's fall," possibly with reference to the death of Froda, Ingeld's father, in battle with the Danes. The whole passage offers difficulty. A current reading, dependent upon a different emendation, runs, "Often and not seldom, in any place, after a prince's fall, is the death-spear lowered, though the bride be goodly," a gnomic

statement followed by Beowulf's forecast of the issue in this special case. Kluge's reading offers less difficulty. After the overthrow of the Heathobards, peace has been preserved only by continual renewal of the treaty between the two peoples, and the marriage will assure its continuance but for a short time.

55. **Therefore it may ill please**: The poet here endows Beowulf with prophetic foresight in order to introduce into the poem the story of the results of Freawaru's marriage to Ingeld, which were known, no doubt, in a separate story. In place of bringing to an end the feud between the Danes and the Heathobards, the marriage must lead to a renewal of strife, owing to the anger of the Heathobards at seeing one of the bride's retainers decked in armor won in the fight from one of their number. This retainer is killed by the son of the man whose sword he wears, and the feud starts afresh. From a reference in "Widsith," it seems clear that Ingeld later sought out Hrothgar at Heorot, and there received a crushing defeat at the hands of Hrothgar and his nephew Hrothulf. Possibly it was at this time that Heorot was burned; see p. 3 ("Warring surges," etc.) and note.

57. **His glove hung**: The word "glove" has been explained as a bag for Grendel's spoils. It has also been used as evidence that the original of Grendel was a bear (compare also the description of his claws; see p. 27), the glove representing what was originally his paw or pad.

60. **After Hygelac fell**: In his foray against the Frisians. Heardred was killed by the Swedes; see note on p. 65.

60. **Therein went some man . . . angered thereby**: The translation of this almost illegible passage is based upon the reconstruction of Bugge and others, as given in Holder's edition.

61. **Soon it befell . . . treasure-cup.** A passage still more illegible than that above, a line and a half having disappeared beyond recovery. In the translation, the liberty is taken of bridging this gap, but without the introduction of words not in the original.

64. **Beowulf came thence.** Hygelac's historic foray is here referred to; see p. viii.

65. **Outlawed men sought him**: Wyatt's explanation of this somewhat obscure story is the simplest and most plausible. The sons of Ohthere, Eanmund and Eadgils, banished from

Sweden for rebellion, take refuge with Heardred. Eanmund is killed in a quarrel by Weohstan (see p. 71 and note). Their uncle, King Onela, son of Ongentheow, in wrath at their harboring with his hereditary foes, invades Geatland, Heardred is slain, and Beowulf succeeds to the throne. Beowulf later aids Eadgils in an invasion of Sweden, when the latter slays Onela on the ice of Lake Wener, as described in the Norse version of the story.

67. **The sons of Ongentheow**: Onela and Ohthere made forays into Geatland, and the Geats retaliated, carrying off Ongentheow's queen (compare the later account, p. 79 ff.). Ongentheow in turn invaded Geatland, killed Hæthcyn and recovered his wife. The Geatish army was encompassed, but Hygelac (Hæthcyn's younger brother, the king served and loved by Beowulf) came to the rescue. Ongentheow was driven back to his fastness and there slain (see the fuller account on p. 79 ff.) by Eofor, after he had struck down Eofor's brother, Wolf. These events precede those described, p. 65 and note.

68. **I . . . slew Dæghrefn**: During Hygelac's foray.

71. **Eanmund . . . whom . . . Weohstan slew**: Shame at killing a friendless exile and guest prevented Weohstan from boasting of his exploit, though the slain man was the nephew of Onela, the hated foe of the Geats.

79. **Franks and Frisians**: An allusion to Hygelac's foray.

79. **The good-will of the Merovingian**: The Merovingian king of the Franks. This reference seems to prove that the poem was composed before the downfall of the Merovingian dynasty in 752.

79. **Nor do I look . . . for peace or good-faith from the Swede-folk**: Another and fuller version of the story told on p. 67; compare also the note. The messenger rightly fears the Swedes may seek vengeance, now that Beowulf is dead.

80. **The plain of peace**: Not clear; sometimes regarded as a proper name. Perhaps the plain before, or the open space within, a "peace-city," or secure fastness of a people, associated with it in name and itself comparatively free from danger of marauding attacks.

85. **His wife likewise . . . and captivity**: The translation is here based on Bugge's reconstruction of an illegible passage.

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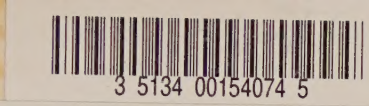
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